

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION AND IDEOLOGY OF  
HISTORICAL SPACES IN ISRAEL AND THE WEST BANK**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

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I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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DATE: 10 November 2020

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## **ABSTRACT**

The relationship between political, religious ideology and the interpretation of archaeological excavation in the Holy Land has faced criticism and has been debated by scholars since the beginning of biblical archaeology in the 19th century and up to the present day. These debates are not just academic but have manifested itself in the public narrative and are alleged to have consequences regarding the history of Israel and the physical space inhabited by both the Israelis and the Palestinians. Some of the current excavations in Jerusalem are viewed with suspicion. Archaeology is singled out to be biased in its interpretation and that it is being used for political ends. An investigation of the point of intersection between archaeology, politics and religion is important for the discourse and question whether archaeology in Israel has become complicit in the establishment and continued maintenance of nationhood and the Zionist project, as alleged by the minimalist scholars and opponents of Israel. Biblical archaeology has been drawn into this debate and its interpretation. The negative externalities of this discipline are the perceived use of the biblical text as a reference document and the subsequent findings of Late Bronze and Iron Age archaeology, which raise questions about the veracity of the biblical text and its impact on biblical scholarship and religion.

Archaeologists and their interpretation of these spaces find themselves amid this paradigmatic revolution. The integrity of these scholars, their methodologies and their motivations are interrogated to the point of an ideological debate.

The position of Palestinian archaeology hangs in the balance and there is no clear indication as to its future or whether any collaboration with Israeli archaeology is possible due to the politicisation in the region and the distrust that exists between Israel and the West Bank in general.

This research reveals the extent in which these externalities of biblical archaeology and its interpretation have had an effect on ideology and its prevalence, and whether the questions and criticisms raised are justified. The views of archaeologists who have been actively involved in the excavation of the region provide these answers.

## **KEYWORDS**

Archaeology, Biblical archaeology, Interpretation, Ideology, Nationalism, Near East, Theory, Israel, West Bank, Minimalists, Religion, Palestine

## DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

**Anti-Semitism:** *noun* hostility to or prejudice against Jews

**Empirical:** *adjective* based on observation or experience rather than theory or logic.

**Nationalism:** *noun* 1. Very strong feelings of support for and pride in your own country.  
2. Belief in independence for a particular country.

**Rationalism:** *noun* the belief that opinions and actions should be based on reason rather than religious belief or emotions.

**Zionism:** *noun* a movement for the development of a Jewish nation in Israel.

Source: *Oxford paperback dictionary & thesaurus*, third edition 2009. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Cognitive and post-processual archaeology:** interprets the evidence on an anthropological and a multidimensional cultural view.

**Processual archaeology:** interprets the evidence based upon scientific empiricism and behaviourism.

Source: Whitley, D (ed) 1998. *Reader in archaeological theory, post-processual and cognitive approaches*. London: Routledge.

### Abbreviations

BCE – Before the current era

CE – Current era

IAA – Israel Antiquities Authority

PEF – Palestine Exploration Fund

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# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 Introduction

For many of us, archaeology represents a luxury, or an intellectual enterprise and its repercussions rarely have life or death consequences ... (Meskell 1998:2).

The human experience is caught within a paradox created by our sense of history and culture. Just as science, the more we study it, the more it changes and eludes our comprehension of what it teaches us. Archaeology suffers from the same debilitating effects and afflictions, which are imposed in an attempt to arrive at truthful conclusions about the past, the present and the future. The material markers of people seem to be an indelible signature of who we are, what we believe in and what we stand for. With particular reference to the two regions this thesis covers, Hamdan Taha (2019) from the West Bank contends that “[t]ruth will liberate not only the Palestinian, but it will also liberate the Israeli from the lie they are living. Therefore, it will be for the benefit of all, especially coming to an arrangement, it will be a way to avoid misery and bloodshed”. He thinks people can live and work together, leaving aside historical justice or injustice, and that people should find a way to come to *pay out*. “People cannot be just a hostage of the past. Philosophy can deal with things to a lost moment in the past, completely. Aside from all the means of power you have – it is divisive completely, and it is just a state of mind; it is archaeology which makes people think that they are creating something. They think that they are restoring the past completely” (Taha 2019). He thinks it is necessary to highlight the present Palestinian fight about history. He concludes with the following: “History is a space for architects, but architects can do what they want. They design the model they want.” In this regard, Whitelam (1996:21) also holds the following view:

The belief that the nation state was the greatest manifestation of advanced culture has been reinforced in the perception of the development of the modern state of Israel. These factors have combined in intricate ways to shape and dominate the study of ancient Israelite history, producing a model that has denied validity to any other attempts to understand or produce a history of ancient Palestine.

Through the course of this thesis, this position as will be seen to have had a direct impact on Palestinian archaeology, giving rise to some negative externalities for Israeli archaeology.

This thesis relied on the views of various scholars, based on questions that were posed to them, either in person or by mail. The aim of the questions was to garner a response

regarding the above predicament that faces the archaeology of both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and how to ultimately get to a history of the region that would be acceptable to both. The reader will note that the transcriptions of the interviews are basically verbatim discussions, even though they are in some instances not grammatically correct. This has been done purposely and kept this way for the sake of the conversational tone in which the discussions took place with scholars whose first language is not English, but either Hebrew or Arabic.

In 1977, NASA launched a probe into outer space with various languages, music, sounds and a diversity of cultural peculiarities, arts, literature, sciences and historical architecture, all representative of the human species and other animal inhabitants of planet earth. Indeed, as the then president of the United States proclaimed: “This is a present from a small, distant world, a token of our sounds, our science, our images, our music, our thoughts and our feelings. We are attempting to survive our time; we may live into yours” (Oakes 2019).

Many of the messages on the recording also included that of peace and greetings (Gambino 2012).

The question I ask is whether this probe, if ever found by an alien intelligence, would be truly representative of us and whether this intelligence will make any sense of it, to know who we are and what we represent.

Here on earth, we know that our cultural, religious and political ideologies conflict. This is driven by our sense of history, our own textual and material historical markers and the interpretation thereof by us as archaeologists, historians, politicians, scholars and the broad public, as well as what we allow ourselves to make of this evidence. The notions of objectivity, subjectivity and interpretation come into play and collide with extraordinary and sometimes tragic results.

Objectivity, subjectivity and interpretation thus feeds off the other and become entangled in conflict and debate. The ‘truth’ is evasive, and the veracity of provenance eroded by time (Conradie 2016:158).

An interesting point during the making of the Voyager Golden Record was the decision that had to be made with regard to what type of music would be representative of the whole human species.

The decision fell on ‘world music’, based on the following insight and foresight of the makers of the Golden Record:

Whether by chance or by design, the Voyager Golden Record anticipated the shifting cultural and aesthetic contexts through which many listeners heard and understood “world music”, a shift that would become blatantly obvious in the decades to come. More than a culturally-sensitive replacement for labels like “exotic music” and “primitive music”, more than a grab bag of unclaimed non-Western music and vernacular music, the Golden Record anticipated a sensibility in which the “world” in *world music* was made more literal – both by fusion-minded musicians, and by music retailers who placed these fusions in newly-designated “world music” sections (Oakes 2019).

However, one must acknowledge that these musical fusions were sometimes problematic, too often relying on power differentials between the borrower and borrowed-from music and musicians. Oakes (2019) states the following:

In this respect, and other respects beyond our scope here, “world music” embodied many of the contradictions inherent to the rise of globalisation, postmodernism, hyperreality, neoliberalism, etc. – coinciding with the crossing of a threshold sometime in the 1970s or 1980s according to most accounts – with the outcome being a world that’s ever more integrated (the global economy, the global media, global climate change) but also ever more polarized, each dynamic inextricably linked to its polar opposite – a sort of interstellar zone where the normal laws of physics no longer seem to apply.

This is covering your tracks as one might say. Unfortunately, archaeology does not have this luxury because, in my opinion, it ultimately deals with the here and the now. And nowhere is it more evident than in the Near East and in Israel and the West Bank.

The search for its history lies within the ambit of every generation. This cannot be challenged. The recognition, grasp and understanding of the elements of this search, as well as the interpretation of this evidence, can be challenged. It appears that the further we go back in time, the fewer challenges there are in the political and public domain. Sure, we see that interpretation of the fossil record are challenged by scholars, but this is usually very scientific and never really gets the attention of the public or features in political debates. The closer we get to the present, the more frequent these challenges become. Historical archaeology will be ignored as it is fraught with contention and recent memory. The evidence of history lies too shallow in human consciousness. In some instances, the pain or glory is too recent and very much caught up in the collective ideology of the people. The importance of this will depend on which side of the paradigmatic fence you find yourself. However, as Nadia Abu El-Haj (1998:171) argues:

Privileging certain kinds of events as those of which history is made has had implications not only for the kinds of stories told but also for nature of the objects deemed archaeologically (and thus historically) significant. This broader conceptualisation of history and of the objects of which is made has, in turn, dictated that certain “other” (that is, non-Jewish) remains also be produced and preserved in the archaeological record, even if their presence contravenes the overriding goal of revealing a Jewish national past.

The unexcavated evidence is there, yet it does not exist unless we give it life in the form of meaning. It is thus very tempting to hypothesise meaning and research that fall within the current paradigm. To boot, this research would be more easily funded as its results are probably a little more predictable, and it may have a positive impact on the popular narrative. In many instances, we find that this narrative is driven by political sentiments. It does not necessarily imply that scholars are the vehicle that drives the narrative. However, a direct link to scholarly research done on the ground is funding, and this could potentially perpetuate secondary interpretation and bias towards the work done.

Accordingly, it is not a question of whether politics play a role, but rather a case of how much. As Knapp and Antoniadou (1998:13) state:

Across the spectrum of contemporary archaeology, few would deny that political realities impact powerfully and often negatively on both archaeological practice and archaeological interpretation. We hear more of archaeology's role in the construction and legitimisation of cultural or ethnic identity, and of the destruction, sale, and obliteration of archaeological pasts from their modern cultural contexts. Such "cultural cleansing" is nourished by the consequences of war, nationalistic fervour, inter-ethnic conflict, and the illicit and universally condemned trade in antiquities.

Consequently, there is a need to ensure that archaeologists are not exposed to the multi-layered state machinery and the exploitative power of the politics of the state and society unless, of course, it is their choice to do so. In the modern state, the pitfalls are hidden and can often inadvertently expose the archaeologists in a negative light. As Hamilakis (2005:100) points out: "... professionalisation leads to the obedient figure of the academic or scholar who is ready to serve any power (always holding the highest of professional standards), but never questioning the agendas to which his or her work is put, nor the broader dynamics of power in which that work is inscribed."

We note that the above has not always been confronted and, if so, it was delicately done, except of course for the non-practising archaeologists of the Copenhagen School. Knapp and Antoniadou (1998:14) argue as follows: "Despite a longstanding archaeological tradition and the global impact implicit in any study of the Middle East, most studies of archaeology and ethnicity or nationalism have steered clear of the regions volatile states."

There are, however, exceptions or degrees of exception on both sides of the archaeological interpretation and practice in Israel and its relation to other non-nationalist views, as we shall see in the thesis.

As Dever (1998:39) points out, the archaeology of the Near East has been in the spotlight and not always in a positive light, as it has political implications. It is continuously confronted with ideology, as he explains:

Syro-Palestinian and especially “biblical” archaeology have always been particularly subject to perversion by ideology. There are obvious reasons for this: They deal uniquely with the “Holy Land”, which for centuries has been emotionally laden, not only for Jews and Christians, but for nearly all who count themselves part of the Western cultural tradition (“politically correct” or not). Furthermore, the current struggle for supremacy and national destiny in the Middle East – especially for control of the areas that were once ancient Palestine-has brought the protagonists to the flashpoint. Whose Bible is it? Whose land is it? The whole world has a stake in the answer.

Despite the “biblical archaeology or not biblical archaeology” debate, Dever met with criticism for his attempts to re-establish archaeology of the biblical period into something more palatable, credible, and not ridden with religion and “fundamentalism”, as argued by Lance (1982:100, 101), who stated:

My plea is that more of us opt for the basic identification as biblical interpreter and thus redefine our priorities so that the benefit of our archaeological research is self-consciously brought to bear on biblical studies. The biblical archaeologist in this sense is a bridge-builder and interpreter, making available the insights gained from one's archaeological study to other scholars and to the general public. Second, Albright's catholic definition of biblical archaeology must be maintained, for it describes the world which must be understood in order to understand the Bible. The question is how to keep in touch with so vast a territory, given the information explosion. The obvious answer is specialization, but then we are once more on the slippery path to mutual isolation.

From the above, it is evident that some scholars were out of touch with what was happening and the amount of criticism that would be levelled at the discipline in the years to come.

The following observation in terms of the perceived role of archaeologists is made by Scham (1998:302), who argues:

Few people who have been disturbed about the effects of nationalism on archaeological interpretation would agree with the proposition that, in recent years, archaeologists have voluntarily assumed a role that invites this misappropriation of their scholarship. Nonetheless, although archaeologists have traditionally presented themselves as “trustees” of the past, in a strict legal (as well as practical) sense what they have become are contractors. The archaeologist-as-trustee concept, never very well defined to begin with, has gradually eroded.

During the 1980s Albert Glock referred to the development of archaeology in the past, when the region was still Palestine, and argued that the historically based circumstances and the conflict of the region suffered under a plethora of foreign nationalities who did the archaeology for the Israelis and the Palestinians. Glock (1985:469) asked:

Where else except in Jerusalem does one find American, British, French, German, Italian, and Spanish archaeological institutes hosting foreign scholars to do someone else's

archaeology? The indigenous population of Palestine has long been Arab and Jewish. Because archaeology was largely a western intellectual phenomenon, the first organization of residents to support the search for the archaeological past was the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society (JPES) founded in 1913, mostly by immigrant scholars educated in Europe. It was not until 1933 that the JPES began to publish a bulletin. It is evident that there was a need and a means to fulfil that need that were not felt by the Arab population, whose attachment to the land was not based on the biblical connection but rather on long-term presence. Nor did Islamic tradition cultivate historical scholarship. As a consequence, the archaeology of Palestine was left to biblical scholars with western perspectives. It may not be quite accurate to say that archaeology in Palestine is biblical or it is nothing, but any effort to re-examine the role of the Bible in the pursuit of archaeological aims would be viewed as casting aspersions on a treasured tradition. Western scholars who have had serious doubts about the authenticity of biblical history have not usually been involved in archaeology in Palestine, but this may be changing.

The fact that there are hardly any funds available to do historical archaeology of more recent times is problematic for archaeological inquiry and excavation, as well as for the deployment of relevant theory and methodology into the discipline. Currently, historical archaeology must take a back seat as it offers very little within the parameters of the spectacular. In some cases, we see a complete disregard of archaeology that does not hold the promise of a hypothetical treasure trove that fits the reigning ideological landscape.

In this respect, Baram (2002:15) states that it is not only the doing away with “Holy Land exceptionalism”, but also a case of interest in historical archaeology, as well as the funding of projects. He argues: “Most importantly, in connecting the material changes found in the Middle East to global processes of change, an important step is taken to remove the notion of a Holy Land exceptionalism.” And as far as funding is concerned, Baram (2002:15) notes:

Until recently, archaeological excavations and presentations of the places of the Ottoman period received no official support. Neither local (Israeli and Palestinian) institutions nor foreign (Western European and North American) archaeological expeditions, which created and continue to be the main financial support for archaeology in Israel, have sustained interest in the Ottoman centuries.

I can confidently state that this is still the case, given that in 2019, all the interviewees either referred to the first point, which is that Israeli archaeology has a rich non-textual topography still to be excavated and that historical archaeology to a large extent does not apply to Israel, but rather a US or European post-colonial period, or that the funding for historical archaeology projects is scarce.

In this regard, the late Albert Glock (1985:470) pointed out:

It is the absence of archaeological theory that explains why scientific analyses of ecofacts and artifacts continue to be descriptive lists forming appendices to reports where stratigraphically ordered architecture and pottery are indices of cultural change linked to a chronologically ordered column provided with absolute dates by cross-cultural and documentary evidence. Theory is understood as speculation. Method refers to excavation technique.

Field technique is in fact too precise for the level of questions asked and not detailed enough for hypothesis testing. This is not to say there have been no innovations in the archaeology of Palestine.

In addition, notwithstanding the numerous publications and articles by prominent Israeli and foreign archaeologists who have worked on excavations in the region, and who reject the notion of strict adherence and reliance on the biblical text, they have had criticism levelled at them by various schools and the media, which are pervasive and have entered the arena of political ideology and nationalism.

At the outset, it would be remiss of me not to mention that there is a wider cultural relationship between the West and Israel that transcends the nationalism and identity of both the Israelis and the Palestinians. It transcends Zionism, Jewishness, and both Islam and Judaism. This interest is not forthcoming from the people of Israel or from the West Bank or the Arabs living in Israel. This cultural relationship and affinity have been claimed for centuries by the West, since the advent of Christianity. It is in the interest of the people of the West and for various end goals, such as the almost fanatical Crusades, which culminated in 1095 CE and left many thousands dead. This investigation cannot only be restricted to current Israeli or Palestinian archaeology and politics. The net must be cast wider so that it will include this special relationship that the Western world has with the region within which lies the stuff of religion, faith, legend, myth and adventure. Very often, to the detriment of the people who live in this region, and also as Knapp and Antoniadou (1998:14) hold: "... in order to treat the politics of archaeology in the region, it is necessary to consider deeper currents in the unfolding of the modern world system-the spread of capitalism, and the eventual but inevitable reaction of postcolonial cultures."

This thesis deals mostly with Israeli archaeological examples; hence we need to also establish what Palestinian archaeology is and what it would investigate if the tables were turned by the current conflict. Glock (1994:83) explains:

One could claim that a "Palestinian archaeology" is the other side of the coin, an archaeology with an equally political intent. This claim would have merit if a Palestinian archaeology involved an effort to efface the record relating to the Jews, Jerusalem in the tenth and second centuries B.C., or synagogues in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., for example. But this is not the case. Palestinian archaeology, assuming the general veracity of written records, acknowledges the polyethnic nature of Palestinian cultural history. Indeed, research into the distinctive features of ethnic diversity is an important feature on the research agenda of Palestinian archaeology. As in all good science, we do not favour one answer or the other. We will test for multicultural indicators as a hypothesis, no more than that, to determine the probability of its truth.

I believe this sentiment may well be the case. However, this research showed that the current reluctance to work together and the lack of cooperation between the Palestinians and Israeli authorities do not bode well for the discipline in the broader Near East region.

To the careful observer, the contrast between the carefully masoned limestone and dolomite stone of the architecture in Jerusalem, juxtaposed against the stark concrete buildings in Ramallah and East Jerusalem, paints a picture of loss and deprivation. The romance of Jerusalem and the richness of Tel Aviv is not found in the towns and cities of the West Bank. Indeed, what we see is a loss of provenance again, but this time it is not only an artefact that has been sold on the illicit market. This time it includes the loss of provenance of the people themselves. In other words, it entails the possible falsification of identity and origin through archaeology, history and politics.

With this thesis, I have taken a step towards either corroborating this criticism or waylaying it. The research took me on a journey to Israel and the West Bank, where I met these archaeologists in person and had the opportunity to discuss their views and opinions. The reader will see various interpretations of the current views and conflicts, and I will give mine.

In addition, archaeological theory building is a necessary component of historical archaeological practices. An abundance of targeted stratigraphies would therefore not always necessitate a reliance on theory, because the excavation methodologies are designed during the survey stage. It will inadvertently lead the archaeologist to do away with theory and historical layers, as has been and still is the case in the region.

This PhD thesis flows from an unpublished MA dissertation on the forgery, illicit trade and looting of the physical artefact and the negative destruction of provenance (Conradie 2016). This time it addresses the possible negative influence of the political and religious ideology of the archaeology in Israel and the West Bank. In other words, I once again investigated unknown provenance, but this time it has an impact on human settlement and identity with the land within the borders of Israel and the West Bank.

It established how the archaeology of this region has promoted nationalism, which led to the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948. The research showed that the stratigraphy and provenance, the time and space of archaeological excavations and its interpretation are once again inextricably linked in the search for truth.



Zionism and the culmination and establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 have enjoyed an extraordinary amount of attention on a global scale. It has been the centre of controversy ever since the advent of Zionism in the late 19th century and the cause of subsequent wars of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as well as the civil wars that ravaged the Middle East ever since and up until the present time. At the centre of this are Israel and Palestine. The negative perception of this region's political landscape is severely criticised by the supporters of a free Palestine. The restitution of the land to its original owners is *sine qua non* to a peaceful settlement.

Until peace settles over the land, geopolitical arguments will continue, and the violence and armed conflict will not abate. It will continue to destabilise the Near East region and make it the playball for international superpowers to establish strategic footholds, which in all probability do not have the answers to this conflict. Dadoo and Ozman (2013:32) argue as follows:

The very creation of the State of Israel in 1948 was based on the hypocrisy of Zionism, a political movement established by Herzl in 1897. The movement aimed to secure an ethnic and racially exclusive state for European Jewry: the formation of a Jewish state in a Jewish homeland – even though the Zionist founders themselves were not religious Jews.

An opposite view is held by Cohn-Sherbock and El-Alami (2015:260), which reflects the following sentiment and argument:

The Jews had been oppressed simply because of their faith. They constituted a small, vulnerable minority in alien cultures. In the face of rising anti-Semitism agitation, particularly in Eastern Europe, these Zionist pioneers championed a Jewish homeland to safeguard the lives of their co-religionists. Was this truly an immoral act?

Civil strife and violence are the outcomes of such deeply divided opinions, as mentioned above. The continuous declaration of intifadas and riots reflects this division. Reasons for this can be described as either one of traditionalism and/or the right to occupy holy places.

Wasserstein (1996:684) says the following:

[T]he Muslim crowd was concerned, above all, to vindicate the tradition of Jerusalem as the site of the first *Qibla* (the direction in which Muslims turn to pray, now that of Mecca), and the place of miraculous ascent to the seventh heaven after his night time of flight from Mecca on the winged steed al-Buraq. The Jewish tradition that the *Shekhinah*, or spirit of God, hovered especially around the last few standing stones of the Temple was of no less importance.

This alludes to the importance and following of religious ideologies and the sites where it is practised, which are of significance for both those of the Muslim and Jewish religious faiths, respectively. It is against this background that the research and investigation into the role of

biblical archaeology in its beginning years were conducted. However, as we progress, we see that the issue of ownership of land enters the equation and becomes a nationalistic debate.

What role did archaeology play during these phases of the history and conflict of the region and what role will it play in the future? We see that the archaeological discourse is tainted with contention and robust debates about the authenticity of archaeological interpretation involving geopolitical issues regarding land, religion and self-determination. To what extent has archaeology been used as a pawn in these debates? Meskell (1998:2) states that “[a]rchaeological and historical narratives are deeply imbricated within socio-political realities. In this region archaeology matters in very tangible, as well as ideological, ways”.

In a perfect world, Ilan (2014:78-79) contends that “it is clear that archaeology can be used as a tool of social and political action; it is highly effective as such”. He also states:

Archaeology can give people a more nuanced, long-term perspective of their place in the land and in history. The conflict in the Middle East is comprised of a thousand nuances. If we can instil a sense of complexity and demonstrate the possibility of multiple perspectives, our public may become more amenable to seeing the viewpoint of the other side.

We also see that amidst these layered and nuanced viewpoints archaeology can easily fall victim to exploitation by sensationalism and historical views that are in vogue at the time. Magness (2003:215) comments as follows: “Archaeology is not an exact science because it involves human behaviour (in the past and the present) and interpretation. Human behaviour is unpredictable, and interpretation is often if not always subjective.”

During the 20th and 21st centuries, we have also seen the development of various schools of thought regarding the archaeology of this region. The contestation of biblical archaeology by the Copenhagen or the minimalist school has been thoroughly debated and the historicity of a nationalist Israel has been vociferously argued (Lemche 2015). Later schools of thought, such as post-processual archaeology, have challenged the empirical objectivity of archaeology and, more specifically, post-processual archaeology has called for a more subjective approach. A distinguished scholar and post-processual champion, Ian Hodder (2012:1-2), holds that “much of the critique of processual archaeology was about theory rather than method, and the main emphasis was on opening archaeology to a broader range of theoretical positions, particularly those of the historical and social sciences”.

This sentiment is also entertained by historian scholars who critique the use of terminology in history textbooks that rely on the biblical narrative. Cargill (2001:316) comments:

... of the textbooks I have consulted, most of them fail to do the job, and they fall short in greater or lesser degree – for the same reason: bestowing (usually implicitly) a special status on one particular body of ancient literature that is not bestowed on any other. The Hebrew Bible is simply not a reliable source for the history of ancient Israel, and the authors of the textbooks surveyed seem largely unaware of this fact. Writers of textbooks for undergraduates need to ask themselves: If we are content to provide students with mythical, legendary, uncritical histories of ancient Israel, how can we have any legitimate grounds for complaint or criticism when others are willing to provide mythologized, fictionalized histories of other peoples and places?

About the above, I note with interest the discussion of postmodernism in historical criticism by Aichele et al. (2009:401, 402) who state:

In short, the fundamental problem in the way of a postmodern historical criticism is the human tendency to believe ourselves in possession of the Truth or at least in Truth's anteroom. This belief, whether it appears in historical criticism or modern science, bears a striking resemblance to the perspective of fundamentalism (or dogmatism). By contrast, postmodernism expects no ultimate signified.

They further explain:

It does not claim possession of any final Truth, allowing instead only the always provisional, pragmatic, transitory truths of day-to-day life. It may dissent and critique, but it always lives parasitically. Postmodernism is forever restless, forever wandering. A postmodern historical criticism must be aware of its distance from the text and of its own ideological impositions of meaning. Nevertheless, a postmodern historical criticism will always be first and foremost a postmodern criticism, and that will be a serious problem for some (Aichele et al. 2009:401, 402).

The influence of postmodernism on post-processualism in archaeology is evident and, as we know from scholars such as Hendel (2014:251), the historical-critical method is under scrutiny by postmodernist theory and, viewed from the perspective of a Marxist materialist, construct and relativism. In my opinion, this makes it extremely difficult to apply to the archaeological interpretation of Israel, unless one only concentrates on recent colonial and post-colonial history of a male-dominated society, based upon bourgeois values. Hendel (2014:252) observes that such views would be an “oversimplification” and “self-contradictory”.

This study entertains the contributions of all these schools of thought but has to reveal, in conclusion, a ‘rationality’ which does not show bias. It challenges the established theories regarding archaeological interpretation in a highly religious and politically charged geographical area.

Archaeology is a discipline that studies and investigates the past material culture of the human species. To a very large extent, it relies on the empirical data that are gleaned from the investigation of excavated artefacts, found in the stratified layers of the earth at the excavation site. Since the middle of the 19th century, we have seen various methodologies of archaeology employed to extract this information. In the Levant and the Middle East, we saw various schools of thought applying their skills and formulating their interpretations to arrive at a clear picture of the past.

In the not too distant past, biblical archaeology attempted to prove the biblical text correct. Bunimovitz and Faust (2014:44) explain it as follows:

Its goals were to identify the period of the Patriarchs, to prove the historicity of the Israelite conquest of Canaan, and to place Israelite monotheism in its appropriate position within the ideological history of the ancient 'Near East' and 'Paradoxically', though the 'Israeli school' of Biblical Archaeology that developed mainly after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was secular, its scope and interest paralleled those of the Albright school. For the first generation of Israeli archaeologists, the Bible served as a founding document of the nation's history.

Later, developments such as processual archaeology attempted to remain objective in its interpretation. In sharp contrast to this, post-processual archaeology relies on a much more subjective interpretation and, as it claims, is therefore not free from influences that are outside of the information gathered from the site. Hodder (1999:23) explains:

Many writers have argued that archaeology needs to move beyond the debilitating split between a belief in the objectivity and independence of positivist science on the one hand, and on the other hand, the view that the past is entirely constructed in the present so that all views are equally valid and "anything goes".

However, this would be an extreme viewpoint and will be further expanded upon. In the same breath, it could be asked whether there is, in fact, a theoretical interpretive similarity between the subjective interpretation of the 1960s' biblical archaeologists and the post-processual archaeology of the 1990s. Both have used strict processual methodologies; yet, interpretation was very much based upon a subjective interpretation.

We have seen over decades the opinion of some scholars being that the interpretation of archaeological data and its connection with the biblical text have been manipulated on purpose or engineered to either fit a hypothesis or to fit certain preconceived religious or politically driven ideologies. One of the champions of the 'minimalist' school, Niels Peter Lemche (2015:6), argues that "[it] is part of a national mythology defining Israelite identity". Claims of socio-political engineering regarding the archaeological and historicity of Israel

as occupied territories, and the settlement of Israeli settlers in the occupied territories on the West Bank, are present contentious outcomes of this.

Dr Dawoud-El-Alami (Cohn-Sherbock & El-Alami 2015:270), Senior Teaching Fellow of the University of Aberdeen holds the following opinion:

Until the middle of the twentieth century, there had not been a Jewish majority in Palestine since that time over eighteen hundred years ago. In a kind of international aberration one of the most significant events of the twentieth century, involving the destruction and dispersal of a settled, indigenous population, has been based on a folk memory that, however vital to a cultural identity of the Jewish people, cannot possibly have entitled to colonize an inhabited land ...

The following question arises: To what extent did the archaeology of Israel/Palestine, mostly driven by Western funding and Israeli/Western scholarship, contribute towards this disenfranchisement? This thesis deals with the interpretation and excavation methodologies of specific sites in Israel/Palestine to either refute or corroborate this claim.

The re-emergence of neo-nationalistic sentiments among the nations of the world to a certain extent necessitates a deeper understanding of the role of archaeology and its influence on politics and religion. We have seen that these social dynamics are especially at play in the Middle East, and especially in the modern State of Israel and its occupied territories of Palestine. Archaeology in this geographical region therefore remains under constant pressure for delivering results that are not necessarily acceptable to all. We have seen in the past that such attempts by archaeological protagonists come under the spotlight and are often vilified.

Kohl (1998:224) states as follows:

Archaeological remains frequently are the sites of violent demonstrations or targets of attacks, as recently demonstrated by Palestinian response to the opening of a new entrance to a tunnel through the old center of Jerusalem and the innocence of the discipline, sometimes cloaked behind a façade of empirical objectivity, cannot be maintained in the light of such graphic, well-covered current events.

This study also investigated the theoretical approaches in archaeology and how these influence the interpretation of the data, the manifestation of this data as historical fact, and the potential dispossession of cultural identity and heritage of the people of this region. Meskell (1998:2) asks the following about this highly contested geographical region: “Near East: why this vast region is erased from contemporary theorising in archaeology which is currently concerned with issues of heritage, contested identities, nationalism and politics?”

In this regard, I may pose the following questions: Is the archaeology of the Near East and that of Israel/Palestine trapped in a political and religious, and ultimately a nationalistically driven debate? Is it experiencing the debilitating effect of relativistic theorising, which to a large extent makes the archaeology of this region too ‘hot to handle’? An observation made by Lamie (2007:114) points to the absence of “an Islamic counterpart to Biblical archaeology”. We see the emergence of a rebellious scholar, Albert Glock from Birzeit University (Fox 2002:21-22), who became disillusioned with biblical archaeology and who proceeded to research the Palestinian history, free from biased interpretations. His life was cut short when he was murdered in 1992 and the case of his death remains unsolved. According to Fox (2002:19), Glock experienced a complete transformation “for he had discovered that what he had thought of in his younger days as the land of the Bible was, in reality, the land of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the scene of a century of hatred, injustice and bloodshed”. Glock proceeded to apply his skills in “uncovering an alternative history of Palestine, a history derived from archaeological facts, rather from the biblical narrative. This meant in effect, not a history of ancient Israel but the Palestinians. It was a view that set him against many of his former professional colleagues in archaeology, and his own background” (Fox 2002:19-20).

During the mid-1980s, while at Birzeit University in the West Bank, Albert Glock began to look critically at the development and differences between the archaeology conducted in Israel, Jordan and the West Bank and that of the approach of the American School of Biblical Archaeology (Glock 1985:464). He argued as follows:

[T]he development of archaeology in the Middle East is more complicated. With rare exceptions American archaeologists in Palestine have majored in Bible and minored in archaeology. By contrast, Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians majored in archaeology taught by Westerners for whom the Bible provided an interpretive model. This education effectively and unconsciously transmitted biblical archaeology to both Arab and Israeli versions of the archaeology of Palestine. In the heat of present political confrontation there is often a lack of awareness of the ideological power of biblical history, creating what might be called a data bias, because the Bible is used in interpreting the archaeological record. It is here that the topics so characteristic of current American archaeology are most relevant. Unfortunately, these topics rarely surface in published discussions. Debate about biblical archaeology is not new.

Initially, an attempt to investigate the interpretation of the original site reports of some of the important excavation sites, and which have made a significant impact on the religion and the political history of this region, proved to be problematic. A comparison of the site reports against the published data and the influence of the human agency did not reveal to what extent objectivity has been skewed towards a nationalistic ideal and how deceptive space

and time can be in the interpretation of the archaeological record. My research revealed that the archaeology of the region is of such a high standard and that pure statistical and hard data, such as site reports alone, would not reveal to what extent interpretation and ideology in historical spaces intersect.

In this regard, Levy (2014:13) holds the opinion that “[f]or archaeologists around the world, their two most precious commodities are the control of ‘time’ and ‘space’ to measure and assess the cultural and historical processes that drive their research interests”. This study investigated how much of this has been considered in the interpretation and methodologies in Israel and the West Bank.

I investigated some interpretations of the historicity of this region over the last sixty years, with particular emphasis on Jerusalem, which is the current hotbed in Israeli archaeology. It is the above-mentioned scholarly views that reveal to what extent archaeological theory has been disregarded or simply ignored in the excavation and interpretation of the data of these sites, in favour of nationalistically and politically driven ideologies. Aren Maeir (2019) holds the opinion that there is “no question that the influence of politics still exists – it is much less dominant than it was in the past and ... much less prevalent, but there are one or two that filters in”. According to Maeir, they live in an ideologically driven society like everybody with various narratives, and those come into effect.

Maeir explains further: “In all kinds of fields there is no such thing as a vacuum, vacuums don’t exist, so as with level-headed archaeologists who don’t present their data and their interpretations to the public in an accessible manner other people will. And not only politicians.” The sciences are just an alternative and there are a lot of people out there who give crazy interpretations of the past. He emphasises that “if you exit the playing field, they take it over.” Therefore, he thinks it is very important for archaeologists to have “extensive sophisticated and multi-faceted outreach to the public”.

This above-mentioned observation by Maeir (2019) is substantiated by Jones and Alberti (2016:22) who maintain: “As we have argued, interpretative archaeology figures the archaeologist as the primary locus of interpretation. This perspective is mapped onto the conceptualisation of the subject that inhabits the past.”

There is, however, a glaring problem with this because we know that post-processual archaeology allows for a much wider interpretation than processual archaeology, which is

focused on the evidence *per se*. These two theoretical approaches are at loggerheads with each other. How do you bridge this impasse when the excavation has major social impacts such as identity politics or ownership of history? Jones and Alberti (2016:18) argue as follows: “We do not wish to argue that the primary goal of archaeology should not be an interpretation, although we will question the character of that interpretative process and the role of archaeologists in it.”

However, we need to note that archaeologists face an immense task in reconstructing the past, hence this research also attempts to reveal to what extent the archaeology of this region has been unfairly treated by critics to dismantle the history of both the Palestinian and the Israeli people. We see that many scholars, either of opposing schools of thought or those sharing the same view, differ on these allegations of biased interpretation.

This research attempts to come to a substantive conclusion from interviews, questionnaires and publications for evidence of favouritism regarding the placement of the proto-Israelites in the Iron Age and the search for Jewish roots. It also investigates to what extent archaeology, in general, has either taken into account the Palestinian history or has disregarded or neglected it in favour of nationalistic ideology.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Historically and up until the present, Israeli archaeology has been labelled with a negative perception by some scholars, the non-secular religious fraternity in Israel and the public at large. By the very implication of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, it is charged with having, as its prime motivator, a nationalistic ideal to give evidence of legitimacy to the aforementioned. This premise is based upon the historicity of the biblical text used in the archaeology of this region, particularly by the early biblical archaeologists. This claim may to a large extent be based upon subtle differences in the interpretation of Israeli archaeology. We need to look at the development of the archaeology of this region to establish my premise. As an example, I would like to point the reader to the following background of Israeli archaeology.

The establishment of Israeli archaeology was to a large extent not concerned with the slow demise of biblical archaeology in America *per se*, given its reliance on theology as the prime mover. To give credence to a new approach, “Syro-Palestinian” archaeology was originally



coined and postulated by scholar and archaeologist, William H. Dever, to replace *biblical archaeology*. This new name would, after all, remove any allusion to a biased and non-scholarly motivation for the archaeology of Israel and Palestine as the archaeology of this region was no longer solely occupied with the biblical text and historical parallels.

However, Israeli scholars led by Yigael Yadin found the coined term “Syro-Palestinian” archaeology problematic because it alluded to Israel being a mere “southern province of Syria’ (Dever 1989:47). However, at the same time, the younger students of Yadin were not as concerned about this new idea of biblical archaeology as they had already moved to the methodologies, as stipulated by the advent of the “new archaeology” (Dever 1989:47).

It should also be noted that the archaeological school of Israel was undeniably secular and not at all concerned with the theological aspects of the archaeology from the 1940s through to the 1960s. Dever (1989:47-48) holds the following view in the subtle distinction between the driving motivation and interpretation of the two schools, namely the American and the Israeli schools of thought: “In America, as we have seen, *biblical* has an inevitable *theological* connotation, in popular circles no doubt something of an advantage, given the quasi-religious climate of culture, but in academic and professional circles a barrier to acceptance.”

The main criticism levelled at Israeli archaeology is that it cannot be used in the corroboration of ethnicity and that it should rather be an anthropological investigation.

I would argue that herein lies the problem that has pervaded this debate of bias in the interpretation of archaeology over the last few decades. It is this historical and subtle perception of the critics of biblical archaeology and/or the secular approach of “Israeli archaeology” that needs to be scrutinised. In this regard, Dever (1989:48) points out:

[In] Israel the Bible is universally accepted simply as the *founding document of the nation's history*. Therefore, the use made of the Bible by Israeli archaeologists is not confessional but secular, in the sense that the objectives of the research are historical rather than theological. It is sometimes overlooked that nearly all Israeli archaeologists are non-religious, some outspokenly so, and their audience is overwhelmingly secular.

According to Dever (2019), Yigael Yadin was a secular Zionist, and that secularism among Israeli archaeologists prevails to this day. He also maintains that nationalistic ideology is less a scholarly issue and that professionalism is paramount. The nationalist debate and narrative are more in the public domain.

I agree with this point. Nevertheless, this would not be considered a valid argument by the Palestinian people on whose land the occupiers settled, as argued by Hamdan Taha (2019:6): “Biblical archaeologists have used the results of archaeology pragmatically to fabricate a mythic narrative of the past confirming the historicity of biblical accounts as quintessential justification of Zionist colonial settlements in Palestine. In 1948, it substantially contributed to the *Nakbeh* and the displacement of Palestinians from their homeland.”

So, to what extent can this corroborate a nationalist agenda? Is it perhaps the use of text? Eminent scholar and archaeologist, Amnon Ben-Tor (Cline 2009:55), states the following: “Eliminate the Bible from the archaeology of the Land of Israel in the second and first millennia BCE, and you have deprived it of its soul.”

In the question of the validity of the biblical text as a legitimate artefact, I make the following observation. The Christian biblical text was kept alive in a canonical and contextual narrative. It had to rely for the most part on the *Codex Vaticanus* and the *Codex Sinaiticus* (Pattie 1977:1). The manuscript (Sinaiticus) itself was first identified by Constantine Tischendorf, a biblical scholar and tireless traveller in search of manuscripts. This occurred in 1844 in the Sinai Desert at the convent of St Catherine at the base of Mount Sinai. Its discovery is of artefactual value and has been the basis of the biblical and canonical context, and certainly should carry as much weight as the Merneptah Stele, regardless of its singular mention of Israel in Egyptian text or for that matter the Assyrian reliefs of Nineveh.

I am further of the opinion that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, derived from a community that lived in this region from “200 BCE until 100 CE” (Annandale-Potgieter 1999:1), ought to add a new perspective on the artefactual importance of text, regardless of it being a translation in Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic, as is the case. The Qumran Scrolls thus prove to a large extent the artefactual nature of the biblical text of both the Hebrew Torah and the Old Testament.

In this regard, we need to view Yadin, who would be one of the main protagonists of the early biblical archaeologists, in a different light to what we would have viewed his predecessors. Yadin was schooled in the biblical archaeological school of Albright and his defence of the biblical archaeology of the 1940s through to the 1990s, as a search for Israeli historicity, is not that foreign a notion, and most probably not open for such *negative* criticisms regarding his endeavours to push a nationalist agenda.

Archaeological investigation is after all in most cases always bound to the time and space and the predilection of human agency. Contrary to this, Meskell (1998:9) states the following: "... if we are to learn anything from the last few years, it is that historically-based tensions can affect all nations. More specifically, it suggests that the residues of empire and colonialism are still at the heart of many conflicts, as well as our own scholarly constructions."

Given the complexity and the clear, non-positivist nature of archaeological excavation results i.e., archaeology can claim only so much empirical surety, I ask the following: Are these views in any way compatible and are they grossly overanalysed by different and opposing theories of archaeology?

In this regard, a view of moderation by Meskell (1998:8) could well be the following statement made by her: "Future archaeological questions could be directed towards how meanings and identities are attributed and negotiated, rather than in the direction of origins."

Further, Hodder (1998:125), a proponent and leading scholar of post-processual archaeology, has made this interesting observation, which to a large extent upholds my view:

It is too easy, and at least to some extent incorrect, to say that archaeologists have excavated in the Near East in order to elucidate the prehistory and history of that region. Archaeological interpretation of the Near East has also been embedded within a Western construction which opposes the East or Orient as 'other'.

However, we need to ask whether this was or is true in the case of Israeli archaeological scholarship.

To what extent then have Western academics imposed their ideas on the archaeology of this region? If we had to draw a timeline of the development of archaeological theory for this region, we will see a parallel line of modernism and post-modernistic interpretation of the human experience running alongside it. It is, therefore, inevitable that the critique of archaeological theory will follow this discourse. In many cases, the debates in politics of national identity claim for self-determination and shared cultural heritage, a claim which far outstrips the development of archaeological theory and its relevance. We are not necessarily moving to a point of no conflict in this regard. We need to be pragmatic and consider all influences.

To this then I would argue that the importance of text with that of archaeology remains important and cannot be disregarded. In this case, the biblical text, as well as extra-biblical

texts, remains an important archaeological artefact to be used in the historical archaeological research of this region, but to be used with due caution.

Popper (2011:420) rejects the notion of pure empiricism in science and also in the concept of social knowledge. History, therefore, is reliant on many factors such as culture, values and ethics, but not at the expense of a dominant relativism. *Historicism*, he argues, cannot predict a scientific knowledge of society (Popper 2011). However, we need to make a distinction of a pure hermeneutical interpretation regarding the ancient texts of this region so far, and the deliberate attempt at matching the archaeology with that text, notwithstanding the mention of Israel in extra-biblical texts, should be treated as evidence with as much relevance as biblical texts.

Hodder (1998:124) makes the following observation:

“The past matters”, but to different people in different ways. The past can be erased, or it can be forgotten, later to be picked up and reused with new meanings. The variety of currents in the Near East make this a complex and highly charged process. But it is all too easy to take a distanced stance which is itself part of the appropriation of the past intellectual gain.

This thesis therefore investigates whether the negative label given to the archaeology of Israel and Palestine is a fair conclusion and whether the resurrection of biblical archaeology will indeed hold water. In favour of re-establishing the rightful place of biblical archaeology, Levy (2014:9) holds the opinion that there is such a place, which is based upon pragmatism and cooperation between the various theoretical approaches. He argues that “... a pragmatic approach to historical Biblical Archaeology will help develop new and innovative ways of objectively tackling the problem of investigating sacred and other historical texts and the archaeological record” (Levy 2014:9).

It is not the intention of this thesis or its objective to investigate archaeological theorising but it is rather an investigation of how we have come to such a crossroad in its development. This is especially important for the archaeology of Israel and the Palestinian West Bank and to what degree this investigation will highlight the interplay of scholarly objectivity with that of politically and nationalistic motivations.

The research questions may therefore be summarised as follows: Firstly, is there any evidence in the archaeological interpretation of the sites covered in this study that was driven by a nationalistic ideology to place modern-day Israel in the Iron Age? Secondly, did this

play a specific role in the legitimisation of the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948?

Just a superficial investigation and some heuristic observation among scholars of existing books and journals reveal that some bias is evident. However, an in-depth study into the archaeological theorising of the different eras and schools of archaeology will reveal that this is not a simplistic and foregone conclusion and that it may be necessary to make a statement of the existence of bias as fact, and then work backwards to prove this to be true or to be false.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives**

This study aims to reveal to what extent the manipulation of archaeological data has influenced the publication of historical text and the impact it has had on the national identity of the people of this geographical area.

At this stage, the site reports on Tel Beth Shean reveal only ‘cold’ data and will therefore necessitate an investigation of final published literature by the archaeologist for scholarly or public reading.

It highlights to what extent modern foreign policy regarding the historicity of this region and the lack thereof have had an effect on the social well-being of the people of this region.

It aims to reveal a lack of robust scholarly debate and theorising in the archaeology of this region and to what extent this has been disregarded by academia in recent times.

It attempts to illuminate contentious political sensitivities regarding the historical and cultural past of this highly contested region, and what influence archaeology has had in this regard and to what extent it can influence its future.

The primary objective of this thesis is not a critique of any of the individual archaeologists, but it is a contextual investigation of the time and place within which the excavation and interpretation took place and whether we can find any ‘nationalistically’ driven bias. This thesis is a critical investigation of archaeological theorising of the past sixty years, using interviews as primary and empirical research and publications as secondary sources.

## 1.4 Methodology

This qualitative methodology has considered the different opinions of scholars that I have researched in various articles and books regarding the topic. I have used a combination of a phenomenological and comparative research methodology of existing literature, primary sources and personal interviews. It consists of the research of existing scholarship, as well as a study of primary sources, which are the views, articles and literary sources of archaeologists and scholars from Israel and the West Bank. To further augment the research, I have met with Palestinian scholars who have to a large extent aligned themselves with the “minimalist school” of Copenhagen. Contrary to popular belief, the minimalist school is still active in contemporary theorising as far as the archaeology of this region is concerned, as revealed during an interview with Professor Hamdan Taha in Ramallah and the publication by Thomas Thompson and Ingrid Hjelm (2019) on a series of lectures and projects on the history and heritage of Palestine. Both are from the University of Copenhagen. Hamdan Taha argues that “the functional relationship between biblical archaeology and Zionist ideology is clearly and openly established, following the Balfour Declaration, as is indicated by the deliberate use of biblical archaeology to justify the Zionist colonial project in Palestine”. It, in turn, was strengthened in the works of William F. Albright, George Ernest Wright, Nelson Glueck and others (Thompson & Hjelm 2019:3).

I have met with scholars from mainstream schools, namely the University of Tel Aviv, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Bar Ilan University, Istiqlal University in Jericho and Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Graduate University in Jerusalem. In addition, I have also interviewed independent archaeologists not working for any university. Where I could not physically meet, I have made use of the same question and answer template that I used for the physical interviews, and these were completed and returned to me by postal services and emails.

Archaeological excavation and interpretation are by its very nature a time-consuming process and archaeologists may sometimes be anxious to report on analysis based upon preconceived hypothesis. Thus, inadvertently steering the excavation findings to fit subjective criteria. In addition to this, the excavator and scholar rely on the work of predecessors who have excavated at the same site. Predecessors to a large extent have set the boundaries of the findings and interpretation up to a point in field reports as well as in published works. The narrative and thoughts have thus been sent on its way. Given the

contestations of archaeological interpretations in Israel and Palestine by various schools of thought, we need to investigate the thoughts and determinations, as well as the structure of archaeological protocols followed.

For this research, I used a qualitative research method. I relied on face-to-face and questionnaire type interviews which took place in private surroundings with some of the scholars mentioned. The research field was simple, but the phrasing of questions to the subjects touched on some sensitive issues, such as scholarship protocols and interpretation of data, as well as politics and concepts such as nationalism and political identity.

The main sources of this data gathering should therefore fall in two categories fields of research, namely artefacts and documents, and interviews (Henning et al. 2004:5-6). I used research based on qualitative inquiry as it allowed me to personally talk to archaeologists, who have vast experience in the field, about their ground-breaking research in the geographical areas mentioned. These sites have added massive value to the archaeology of the region, and the scholarly works of this fraternity are invaluable and an important source for my research. Without the cooperation of these individuals, the research would be seriously flawed and nothing more will be added to the existing published works on the questions of political identity and Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

The qualitative research methodology therefore needed to be open-ended. According to Henning et al. (2004), this research method will highlight “the term that denotes the type of inquiry in which the qualities, the characteristics or the properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation”.

In this regard then, we see that a strict sense of objectivity and neutrality should be followed by the interviewer (me), given the vast experience and decades of work by the subjects at these sites. Henning et al. (2004:53) state that “[t]he content may vary from deep emotions and lived experience to narratives of an individual or a group, or just facts and opinions”. Even though these scholars have had their findings challenged by peers, it was nevertheless a sensitive study to conduct. I say this, based on the intention of this research, which is to question whether there was any possibility of undue influence of personal motivations of a political (nationalism) or religious nature on the conclusions drawn. I realised that this inquiry would be a difficult one as it might be perceived to be an attempt by the interviewer to challenge the academic integrity of the individuals, as well as their research findings and protocols.

It is not my intention to draw conclusions merely from the interviews or answers to the questionnaires and write it up as a thesis. This approach will fail and merely be considered 'thin' research. The research methodology followed needed a robust theoretical approach that included authoritative arguments by other scholars, juxtaposed against the primary research of the thesis. Henning et al. (2004:7) emphasise that "this danger always lurks in interpretive inquiry, but the well-trained researcher will know what to do to address possible bias and to present the 'thick description' with ample empirical evidence".

A definition for thick description, first used by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle in Henning et al. (2004:6), is as follows:

A thick description gives an account of the phenomenon (a) that is coherent and that (b) gives more than facts and empirical content, but that also (c) interprets the information in the light of other empirical information in the same study, as well as from the basis of a theoretical framework that locates the study.

By the very choice of the topic of the thesis, I believe that we need to deconstruct the 'objectivist paradigm'. In Henning et al. (2004:23), the critical framework research methodology is explained as follows:

It is essentially a process of deconstruction of the world. Whereas interpretivists construct our world by means of multiple perspectives, critical theory questions the political nature of that very process, maintain that some relationships in the world are more powerful than others that some theorists enjoy more status than others that some 'intellectual currency' is worth more than others.

It, however, by no means implies that the author of this thesis disregards the deconstruction of other critical analysis by scholars in the archaeology of the Middle Eastern countries.

I would argue that in the case of the archaeology of Israel versus Palestinian archaeology, over the last sixty years we might see the presence of such a phenomenon, as alluded to in the above "intellectual currency". For this research to have any credible outcome and not become just another biased viewpoint, we will need to critically look at the development and status of Palestinian archaeology, especially during the formative years of biblical archaeology, and in the period leading up to the formation of the modern State of Israel in 1948 and afterwards.

In this regard, critical theory, as pointed out by Henning et al. (2004:23), will examine the above archaeological interpretations on the basis that "knowledge is dispersed and distributed, the 'construction' of that knowledge cannot escape the domain of politics", and in addition that the protocols followed in the early archaeology of Palestine might have been



prejudiced by the quest for religious justification, as predicated by Zionism in the 19th century for a homeland for the people of Israel. This ideology can be dated back to the Hellenistic period, as argued by philosophy scholar Richard Tarnas (1996:98-99): “Judaic religion was by character intensely nationalist and separatist, almost wholly centered on the people of Israel.”

Henning et al. (2004:23) argue, as far as critical theory is concerned, that “facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from ideological inscription”. Thus, this approach will fulfil the requirements necessitated by the research question of this thesis.

Below is an example of a letter of introduction sent to the prospective interviewees.

*Prof Dever*

*Tel: (xxx) xxx-xxxx*

*Campus Post Office Box*

[\*dever@xxx.xxx\*](mailto:dever@xxx.xxx)

*Dear Professor Dever*

*This email serves as a personal introduction and an introduction to my PhD research.*

*My name is Dirk Conradie. I am currently a registered PhD student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). This is in the field of Biblical Archaeology. I hold a MA in Biblical Archaeology also from UNISA.*

*My promoter is Professor Willem S Boshoff from the Department of Biblical and Ancient studies. I live in the town of Somerset West in the Western Province in South Africa. I am a full-time employee at a company called Pernod Ricard in Cape Town but as mentioned above am also busy with further studies.*

*The PhD thesis topic that I will cover relates to archaeological interpretations from Palestine and Israel and the political and nationalistic ideologies of this region. The hypothesis that I want to test is whether the archaeological interpretations and subsequent historical publications over the last 60 years have in fact been skewed by nationalistic sentiment among archaeologists and scholars since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948? The research proposal has been ethically cleared by the faculty.*

*I believe that this research is important so that we can better understand the role and responsibilities of archaeology, the excavation protocols, the interpretations as well as the subsequent political exploitation of historical data and publications and works of scholars. This region, in particular, is constantly in the news with regards to the often very violent confrontations between its protagonists. I believe that the archaeology of the Near East has to be seen at the forefront of the debate regarding the political narrative in terms of geopolitical self-determination. My hope is that your views and experience will greatly add to this question.*

*Your extensive archaeological experience, publications and knowledge of this region is therefore of utmost importance to my research. I would be very grateful if I can meet with you to discuss the above. I will of course send you a more detailed agenda and list of questions that will be covered. It is also my intention to interview and discuss the same with other scholars in this field.*

*If you have the time and ultimately the interest to partake in my research, it would be greatly appreciated.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Dirk Conradie*

Upon receipt of the confirmation and availability of the interviewees for these one-on-one discussions, I forwarded the questions to the interviewees. Below is a list of the questions that followed as well as the template that was used during the field trip to Israel in November 2019.

Questions:

1. Do nationalistic ideals in Israel influence archaeological interpretation?
2. Do you believe that Israeli archaeology of today is free from any political or religious influence, resulting in bias interpretation?
3. Since the Yadin era, has the archaeology of Israel evolved into a less ‘romantic’ discipline?
4. Do you believe that the archaeology of Israel lacks “contemporary theorising and is not concerned with issues of heritage, contested identities, nationalism and politics”?

5. To what extent do you believe that the scepticism of identifying the Israelites (ethnicity) in the archaeological record is based upon a 'shaky' (Faust) methodology on the one hand and or a nationalistic agenda on the other hand?
6. Do you believe that the archaeology of Palestine is neglected?
7. In the case of cultural Zionism versus political Zionism, is there a schism between archaeologists as far as this is concerned?
8. Given the above in question 7 and, if so, to what extent do you believe archaeologists of Israel are divided about this?
9. Do you think that the search for the Israelites as the conquerors in the Iron Age still applies in the archaeology of today?
10. Do you believe that the archaeology of Israel is in a state of flux regarding its independence from religion, politics and nationalism?
11. Is the biblical text and nationalism in Israel reliant on each other as far as archaeological interpretation is concerned?

During my research trip, I observed the complex social dynamic interplay of the people living in Israel. This dynamic on the surface is not self-evident when reading about the issues in the media, but can only really be experienced by immersing oneself in the daily lives of the citizens of the country. I believe that my research was also anthropological to some extent.

I could not utilise existing morality and ethics or paradigmatic judgement. It would lead to paradigmatic judgement on my part and, in my opinion, would be false and immature. I realised that the archaeological methodologies operated in the past will have determined the outcomes in interpretation and any subsequent publications. Hence this stands and needs to be respected.

This approach at the outset convinced me that it is a more truthful attempt at understanding the conclusions of other scholars who worked in this region before me. My intellectual fallibility made me more conducive to empathy and thus a more reliable witness.

Given the premise of this research, I argue at the outset that the criticisms raised regarding archaeology being influenced by nationalistic ideology to be mere allegations and nothing

more at this stage. This notion is further strengthened by my conviction that analytical frameworks evolve, often based on the foundations laid by earlier methodologies and hypothesis which fitted the time and space of the researcher. Also, archaeology can only function fully if it is financially funded. This to a large extent can skew outcomes as it may enforce biased interpretation. Finance and ideology are thus inextricably linked. I have come to this conclusion as it was raised by many of the subjects.

The following question is asked: Would it be fair to attack these methodologies and findings while using the benefits of the very methodologies that we attack? All ideas have merit. If they did not exist, we would have nothing to challenge. Equilibrium in phenomenon does not exist, and neither can it in history. These methodologies were created by our predecessors and fit into the time and space of those who have come before us. Archaeological theory and interpretation must, therefore, steer clear of paradigmatic judgement. Only then will we supplant the allegations of populist ideology and rhetorical thinking.

Archaeology is not an exact science, and it relies on a plethora of artefacts, which in turn present itself to the researcher in a subjective form, tied very much to the time and the place of discovery. Any attempt, therefore, to dismantle and ignore the methodologies and interpretations of others against the background within which they operated, will be questionable and just as open to criticism and allegations of academic impropriety.

Archaeological interpretation and the subsequent historical conclusion drawn from this is a difficult task for both the archaeologists, as well as the historian. Indeed, as Diamond (2005:421) alludes: “People’s image of science is unfortunately often based on physics and a few other fields with similar methodologies. Scientists in those fields tend to be ignorantly disdainful of fields to which those methodologies are inappropriate and which must seek other methodologies ...” and further: “But recall that the word ‘science’ means ‘knowledge’ (from the Latin *scire*, ‘to know,’ and *scientia*, ‘knowledge’), to be obtained by whatever methods are most appropriate to the particular field. Hence, I have much empathy with students of human history for the difficulties they face.”

It was with this realisation foremost in my mind that I conducted my interviews and questions to my subjects.

Initial investigation of the site reports of Beth-Shean has not revealed any such evidence; however, an investigation and scrutiny of the subsequently published works of the archaeologists who have worked on the site will reveal to what extent we can find evidence of such biased interpretations. I also investigated whether these interpretations are linked to the original site reports or perhaps to the understanding of other scholars. A subsequent personal interview, conducted with Amihai Mazar at the Mount Scopus Campus in Jerusalem in 2019, revealed that he agreed that analysis of the site reports of Beth-Shean would not be enough to answer these research questions. In addition, a personal interview with David Ussishkin at his home in Holon in 2019, revealed that this problem with the interpretation of site reports for this thesis would be the same for Tel Lachish. This revelation led me to finally change the methodology to be based on personal interviews with scholars of various institutions from Israel and the West Bank, rather than using site reports only. Hence, the primary resources used are interviews and questionnaires.

## **1.5 Hypothesis**

The hypothesis that I want to investigate is whether we can find any evidence in some of the most important sites in the region, previously known as Palestine and Israel, of biased archaeological interpretation. And does this interpretation lean towards an attempt to the legitimisation of the State of Israel? Is the basis for the archaeology a nationalistic ideology, based upon a shared culture with the ancient Hebrews and with the history of modern Israel? This is what some scholars claim and others, such as the Copenhagen School and scholars from within the archaeological fraternity in Israel, refute. An investigation into the primary site reports reveals that the data are not enough and that the methodology had to change. Consequently, personal interviews with archaeologists who worked and published on these sites, would reveal to what extent this is true or false.

An “inductive reasoning” (De Vos et al. 2011:49), a qualitative research process of phenomenology, a textual approach of existing literature and primary data was used. A validated and reasonable theory regarding this hypothesis will hopefully emerge from the interviews, questionnaires and published contextual interpretations.

## 1.6 Motivation for the significance of the study

The ancient Levant, which includes Palestine and Israel, has the best documented historical memory. It is in some cases conclusive and singularly aimed at a most informed scholarly audience. The general public enjoys its religious implications and its potential ability to add to the debate about geographical ownership, as well as its narrative regarding national identity, cultural identity and religious heritage. Yet, it is filled with a singular rhetoric of populist and political interference that significantly polarised the academia on an international scale.

Various schools of archaeologists chose to proceed with the interpretation of this region with broader aims than the mere interpretation of past life and how people lived in this region. Archaeologists took this investigation quite personally. We only need to look at the different archaeological theorising among the American schools and the European and Israeli schools to come to this conclusion. The undertones of archaeological enquiry proved to be of a political nature in many cases. The significance of the excavated artefacts and architectural layout of structures became entangled with ideological debates and, in some extreme cases, the loss of life.

As mentioned previously, during January 1992, an American archaeologist, Dr Albert Glock, was assassinated by an unknown assassin. There are numerous theories as to why this occurred, but one thing stands out. This was no accident of mistaken identity, given the area of Albert Glock's research in the occupied territories of Palestine (Fox 2002:13). The investigation of his death is to a large extent comparable to archaeology. Fox (2002:22) hypothesises the following:

However, much we know of the world that produced that jug handle, rim, cooking utensil and coin, we will never feel the texture of everyday life that was felt when those objects were in use. In the same way, most what could be known about the killing of Albert Glock is lost. Only a tiny fraction of the available data is retrievable, and what is retrievable is ambiguous. Yet to understand his murder would be to understand a whole society, and the conjunction of massive cultural forces.

The impact of these cultural forces can be the destabilisation of the region occurring through civil protests in the form of intifadas by the Palestinians, the occupation of traditional Palestinian territories by the Israeli Defence Force, the rollout of Israeli settlers within the occupied territories and the continuous threat posed to the existence of the State of Israel by anti-Zionism, the military threat posed by the neighbouring counties of Israel, such as Syria and Iraq, and finally the international interference of global superpowers such as the United

States, Russia, the United Kingdom and various European countries with regard to the political and economic determinants of the people of the broader Middle East.

Therefore, this thesis aims to investigate how these cultural forces have played out in the investigation of the archaeology of especially Jerusalem, which is currently the hot zone for these debates, as well as a conflict which directly influences the local inhabitants of the city. However, it is not my intention to research some diabolical collusion between various forces to enforce 'fringe' theories about conspiracies. The history of the Near East is far too complex and has for millennia been constantly in a state of flux, for such a simplistic view. I believe that such a notion is ridiculous and at best the same as hypothesising that humankind has its origins in the stars through some pre-determined and planned intelligent extra-terrestrial alien experiment.

This thesis deals with and investigates archaeological interpretation with possible evidence of nationalistic ideology in favour of the establishment of the State of Israel. The time of this investigation therefore covers 60 years of archaeological investigation.

I have embarked on secondary research of existing literature on the topic, as well as the study of the original site reports of important sites in Israel and Palestine. However, subsequent investigation of the site reports had little to offer as far as the questions raised in the study. I also did exhaustive literature research and held personal interviews which gave insight into these issues and questions.

## **1.7 Literature review**

One of the main scholars in the theory of archaeology is Thomas E Levy, who brings new views to the table regarding biblical archaeology. Levy establishes a renewed look at the importance of this approach again for the study of the ancient Near East. The importance of these views by Levy (2014) is that this work does not abolish the goals and aims of biblical archaeology, but that it and its contributors argue that the discipline is going through plausible paradigmatic shifts and that there is no need to disregard its veracity in describing the interpretations that are currently forthcoming. This is an important book as it gives an overall and very balanced view of the theory and the practical execution and interpretation of biblical archaeology.

Ian Hodder is a proponent of post-processual archaeology, whose work was extensively covered, such as *Archaeological theory today*, second edition (2012) and *The archaeological process: An introduction* (1999). The position of post-processualism in the archaeology of Israel is also widely covered to establish whether Western-based theorising is indeed a necessary component of the archaeology of the Iron Age in Israel. The sources that I used are by Jones, A & Alberti, B (2016) and Jones, A (2015).

In the book under the editorship of L Meskell, *Archaeology under fire* (1998), the author deals with the lack of contemporary theory regarding the Middle Eastern archaeology and poses the question why there is a current hiatus in archaeological theorising regarding this region. This question sets the tone for the problem statement of this research. The origin of Zionism (see Chapter 2) as a precursor to the establishment of the State of Israel remains a contentious historical political thorn for the secular State of Israel, the religious Hebrews, and the Palestinians. All three camps argue that this may or may not be used for the justification of the establishment of Israel and the occupation of some of the holiest places for the Islamic faith and Judaism. In *Essential papers on Zionism* (1996) by J Reinharz and A Shapira (editors), the conflict of occupation and religious ideology is discussed in detail. It is important to investigate this as it will point to the interpretation of ideology and historical spaces as stated in the title of this thesis. This will become clearer as the thesis progresses.

In K Popper's (2011) *The open society and its enemies*, the author alludes to the dilemma caused by ideology. It will continuously challenge the 'truth' in history, as we can never free ourselves from its influence. In short, does the archaeological empirical evidence and the textual evidence of religion provide enough to make the problem of finding the 'truth' any less formidable evidence in a debate about national identity? The philosopher Hegel would postulate that this borders on an "indebtedness to our social heritage" (Popper 2011:432). His notions of "empirical falsification" and "critical rationalism" were used as a benchmark for the interpretation of the archaeological evidence and the subsequent written history in this investigation and thesis.

The minimalist, maximalist debate continues to this day and the thesis gives this quite extensive coverage by referring to the works of Hjelm, I (2019), Davies, P (2015), Kletter, R and Sulimani, G (2016), and Kletter, R (2020).



The need to look at the West Bank, and indeed the plight of the Palestinian people who have lost their land, is an integral part of not only archaeology but also of heritage preservation and identity. In the publications of Abu El-Haj, N (1998) and Abu El-Haj, N (2001) this is extensively covered.

I intended to use the site reports of some excavations that took place over the past decades, as well as into the present. I have only included the site report of Tel Beth-Shean to illustrate my intention with the thesis: *Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean 1989-1996 Volume I, Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean 1989-1996 Volume IV, Tel Beth-Shean 1989-1996 Volume II*, by Mazar, A & Mullins, R (editors). Upon investigation, the following was revealed: It was established that the site reports revealed little as far as bias interpretations and to a large extent only revealed hard data; this was subsequently also confirmed by Amihai Mazar during an interview with him in Jerusalem in November 2019.

In line with the objectives and problem statement of the thesis, questions raised at a conference by archaeologists are evidence that archaeology needs to relook its role in society. I believe that these questions are the fundamentals that the thesis deals with and is addressed in the questions that I raised in my topic list and questionnaire to the scholars whom I interviewed during November 2019.

“In filtering the past, building the future: a conference on archaeology, tradition, and politics in the Middle East”, the author raises important questions, and this thesis attempts to answer some of the questions with additional motivation and comments by scholars and archaeologists from Israel and the West Bank.

For ease of reference and referring to Parker (2004:197), these questions are:

For what other reasons aside from nationalism has the archaeological past been mobilized or appropriated (tourism, mythic harmony, environmental, development, etc.)? Are group views of a chosen topos in a mythic past static (the myth never changes) or dynamic (the myth may change through time)? What are the forces – internal and/or external – that influence versions of the past? What insights into the broader nature of chosen schemes of the past are possible? Are the positions of a particular group towards its past monolithic (i.e. all members accept the precise narrative, strength, and role of a single myth), or is a past created through intra-group negotiation? If negotiations do take place, what are the models that can be applied to explain them (functional, competitive, dominance)? Do archaeological data create political agendas or do political manifestos initiate archaeological work? Are filters on archaeological data definable? Are political interests dictating, constraining, or enabling archaeological interpretations or do political positions adjust in order to coordinate with excavated data?

The research questionnaire and theme of the thesis of archaeological interpretation and ideology of spaces in Israel and the West Bank encompasses the above points raised by existing scholarship and the global archaeological community.

I have also dealt specifically with the frequently raised issue of neo-colonialism, as well as the issue of a Westernised based ideology, which still pervades archaeology in general. This subject is necessary to understand the past and the politics of the region. I studied Hamilakis, Y (2005) and Hamilakis, Y (2007).

In addition, I have also covered the issues of sacred space and negative heritage. It is important to understand that the archaeology of Israel is not just about gaining knowledge of the past and to construct modern tropes of reconciliation of the previously disadvantaged or disenfranchised of colonialism. In the new world of archaeology, we deal with a history that has progressed onward towards a semblance of equilibrium and the main task of historical archaeology is setting the record straight and recognising that culture and ethnicity of all are part of the same thing. These issues are covered in the works of Bar-Gal, Y & Bar-Gal, B (2008), Boozer, A (2015) and Brittain, M (2016).

Archaeology is dependent on funding, the public and media attention. This is specifically the case in Israel where archaeology does play a role in the national debate as well as in the media. It is important to note, however, that the public in Israel is far more aware and show a greater interest in these ideologies of policymakers and will radicalise and launch opposition if they deem it to be detrimental to the State of Israel. In other words, there is a greater tendency to be pragmatic in my opinion and this is reflected in these sources: i24News (2018) and Lawler, A (2019).

I have used personal interviews and questionnaires with prominent and recognised scholars from the fields of archaeology and theology, which were conducted in Israel during November 2019. These are listed below:

Prof. Amihai Mazar, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Dr Alex Fantalkin, University of Tel Aviv

Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Aren Maeir Bar-Ilan, University in Ramat Gan

David Ussishkin, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University

Dr Issa Sarie, Al-Quds University in Abu Dis

Father Lionel Goa, Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the Pontifical University 'Antonianum' in Jerusalem

Mr Gideon Solimani, independent archaeologists and scholar from Jerusalem

Dr Liora Kolska, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Hamdan Taha, Dean of Research and Graduate Studies at al Istiqlal University in Jericho

Prof. William Dever, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Mr. Yonathan Mizrahi, director at Emek Shaveh in Jerusalem

Prof. Ze'ev Herzog, University of Tel Aviv

## **1.8 Limitations**

The site reports reveal little evidence of subjective interpretation and consist mainly of data regarding the location of structures and the stratigraphy of artefacts excavated. There is minimal reference to possible irrefutable claims of bias by the excavators and subsequent publications by the archaeologists and scholars will have to be consulted.

## **1.9 Outline of chapters**

Here follows an outline of the chapters with a brief description of each.

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and deals with the scope of the topic with references to the development of the paradigmatic theory of knowledge, history and archaeology. It contains the problem statement, research questions, the methodology, the aims of the study, the hypothesis, and a literature review, which also contains a reference to the primary research done in the field in the form of personal interviews and a questionnaire. This research was done during November 2019 in Israel in the cities of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Holon and the West Bank in the City of Ramallah.

Chapter 2 discusses historical developments such as Zionism, the effects of colonialism, the establishment of the independent State of Israel in 1948 and the impact on the archaeology of the region and the intersection of ideology.

Chapter 3 discusses the role of religion, politics and its effects on the archaeology, as well as its interpretation and the meaning of sacred spaces, particularly in Jerusalem. It also covers the critique of biblical archaeology by the minimalist school and its arguments.

Chapter 4 reveals to what extent the declaration of the State of Israel has affected the Palestinians and the loss of heritage sites and its impact on the future of Palestinian archaeology. It also focuses on the funding of archaeology and how that affects research. It also discusses the role of popular media in archaeology and how the interpretation of archaeology by the media can be dominated by romanticism and ideology.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the thesis and contains my views and some recommendations as to the problems that biblical archaeology experiences.

Appendix: There is an appendix at the end of the thesis which provides the details of the interviewees and the respondents used during the research phase of this work.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 Archaeology in Israel: External and internal influences

Even though many Israeli citizens are not practising Judaism as a religion today, the geopolitical debates have been influenced by religious differences, and by the ultimate aims and objectives of the three monotheistic religions, namely Judaism, Islam and Christianity in modern-day Israel, and the broader region. It has been so for hundreds of years and has been one of the destabilising factors towards peace among the Arabs, Jews, and Christians. Ultimately this has impacted the allocation of land. Amongst others, such as the occupied territories, the walls and checkpoints, the separation of the Old City of Jerusalem into three distinct, religion-based living quarters are evidence of this ongoing schism. However, the people work and mingle freely within the walls; there are underlying threats to this amicable but fragile social interaction, namely the search for history. Jerusalem is again the flashpoint of social and geopolitical conflict as it has been for millennia. The discipline of archaeology transects the physical space and collides with the daily disputes over land and cuts across the broader ideological landscape. A look into the history will reveal the reason for the precarious position in which the archaeology of the region finds itself and its quest not to be ambivalent on the subject matter and, at the very least, also not to be open to criticism. Scholars would argue that the position of archaeology does not necessitate a political or religious ideology choice. Scholars also state that archaeology is tainted with selective and biased surveys, excavation methodologies and a political ideology.

The history of colonialism and its impact on the broader region, as well as the modern State of Israel, still has its impact felt, but this is more from the perspective of academic discourse. The debates and classification of the study of this region, namely Oriental studies during the 19th and 20th centuries, have added biased interpretations from a Western perspective, and this has caused major confusion as far as the historical analysis and subsequent foreign policy and plans to stabilise the conflict in the region. In short, this has led to a complete misunderstanding of the Arab and Jewish aspirations. Not all Arabs are against the State of Israel and not all Jews are anti-Arab.

Today there is a clear distinction between left-wing and right-wing politics. It is not only as far as party politics go but, to a large extent, remain in academia. The influence of US foreign policy regarding the region is also a major factor. The call for the establishment of the US

embassy in Jerusalem in 2019, as well as the conflict between Jews and Arabs in East Jerusalem, is adding to the frustration of the people of the city; it serves as a symbol of discontent and is ultimately a time bomb that will explode. In addition, the deployment and visibility of heavily armed police force units are not adding to diplomacy in this highly volatile environment.

The media on both sides are also playing a major role in dispensing fake news and overdramatising the situation. The romanticising of the Palestine-Israeli conflict to the point of reporting that all Palestinians are troublemakers and Israelis are the good guys, is false and vice versa. It is simply not the case. There is no doubt that the walls that permeate the territory and the separation of families in villages, as well as the settler question in Palestinian territories, are unacceptable and not a long-term solution. The rejection by the ultra-orthodox Jews of the State of Israel and the rejection by the Palestinian people of the name given to the West Bank territories as Palestine is a case in point and illuminates the complexities. In my opinion, there are simply no good guys and bad guys. An analysis of the region's politics, religions, archaeology and history will reveal this.

### 2.1.1 History

After 1945 and the end of World War II, and the Israeli War of Independence in 1948, there was a spate of international archaeologists, as well as local Israeli archaeologists, such as Katherine Kenyon and Yigael Yadin, respectively, who excavated sites. This, by its very choice, could have been construed to be of national importance and to have links to the biblical text and the writings of ancient historians. These texts referred to the unification of a people and a belief that the ancient Israelites possessed to either conquer or not submit to their enemies. Here we look at the biblical siege and destruction of Jericho in 1550 BCE and the wall which was destroyed much earlier than previously believed. Other examples would be excavations at Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Jerusalem, and the siege by the Romans of Masada during 70 CE and 73 CE (Cline 2019:42-47). I believe that the current excavations in Jerusalem by Eilat Mazar in the City of David and at Silwan would fall within this category, as would trying to corroborate the United Monarchy under the kingship of David and Solomon and national statehood.

As Cline (2019:40) explains: “It was a phase known for the re-examination and excavation of sites that contained possible links between ancient Israelites, in order to both construct a national narrative and continue to explore the veracity of the biblical accounts.”

The search for our history through archaeological excavation is a noble and systematic method in retrieving artefacts of distinct past or culture. However, it can easily be construed by the layperson to be the absolute truth and, therefore, binding on the cultural values of a group whose land it came from and would, therefore, dictate ownership or birthright of this land. As Lowenthal (2015:384-385) reminds us:

Ubiquitous as they are, relics suffer greater attrition than memories or histories, because they are mortal yet irreproducible. Whereas chronicles and recorded memories can be disseminated without limit and are potentially immortal, physical relics continually wear away. However, many vestiges may yet be found, resurrected, and deciphered, the tangible past is ultimately finite and non-renewable, except as time or faith engender new relics. Earlier structures inexorably give way to subsequent ones, if only because two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

It is problematic when an excavation is searching for relics of the past to corroborate current sensitivities around ownership. Archaeology should never be done to justify anything beyond the writing of history or the broadening of knowledge about the past. This is aligned with the meaning of the philosophy of knowledge.

We note that Marxist archaeology criticises post-processual archaeology on the basis that it negates the validity of knowledge that has been extracted from the empirical study of artefacts of the past, as McGuire (1993:131) points out:

The alternative archaeologies that were introduced in the 1980s, post-processual (poststructuralist) and feminist, share a political position with Marxism in the sense that they are identified with a radical left and in that they attack an established processual archaeology. With Marxism they all reject the idea of a value-free objective science and stress that active, knowing subjects have a considerable impact on social processes.

According to him,

They attack the poststructuralists for being too subjective, overly intellectualized (overly theoretical), and too eclectic in their theory. They share the fear of many processual archaeologists that the extreme relativity of post-processual archaeology denies the validity of any knowledge of the past. They fear that this relativism makes it impossible to empirically refute pernicious uses of the past ... (McGuire 1993:132).

During the previous century, Bruce Trigger (1984:358) identified three types of archaeological classifications, namely, “nationalist, colonialist, and imperialist archaeology”. He proceeded to divide this among the world’s nations and to expound on its *raison d’être* for that particular country. In his opinion, the archaeology of the State of Israel

fell within the nationalist classification. I would like to add a fourth and quite unique classification, which is religious archaeology, as this still prevails to this day and is a unique feature of the region and a unique indulgence for the world of archaeology. Nevertheless, I believe the observations of Trigger stand without challenge and are a good guideline for scholars and students of archaeology. He said:

In modern Israel, archaeology plays an important role in affirming the links between an intrusive population and its own ancient past and by doing so asserts the right of that population to the land. In particular, Masada, the site of the last Zealot resistance to the Romans in A. D. 73, has become a monument possessing great symbolic value for the Israeli people. Its excavation was one of the most massive archaeological projects undertaken by Israeli archaeologists. For the most part, Israeli archaeologists are trained in historical and biblical research and devote much time to studying history, philology, and art history. Palaeolithic archaeology is much less important, and the impact of anthropological archaeology has generally been limited to encouraging the use of technical aids in the analysis of data (Trigger 1984:368).

An observation then is that, to a large extent, archaeology in Israel still operates under processual archaeology. It may to some extent deny the post-processual study of the upper layers of occupation, which allows for the most recent histories or, for that matter, the current lived-in spaces in east Jerusalem to tell its story. Hence the fact that theory is not yet considered important, except for the younger generation of archaeologists coming through. The irony here is that the dependence of Marxist theory and archaeology on the state is of paramount importance and that this archaeology would be fed by the ideology of pure socialism. It is the very building blocks of the State of Israel in its beginning years.

As mentioned above, McCollough and Edwards (2007:1) maintain: “Near Eastern archaeology still retains its strong ties to ‘New Archaeology’ or, better, processual archaeology.” According to them and others, there is a need to find a more representative theory for the Near East. They write as follows:

[A]s per the clarion call to develop more useful models to understand the role difference played in the ancient world as well as its on-going significance, even in areas not easily accessible to the modern interpreter. Many depict a marriage of processual archaeology with careful consideration of the way artefacts (including texts) display ideas, symbols and elements of difference, a kind of cognitive processual archaeology (McCollough & Edwards 2007:1).

Should the archaeology of Israel be more concerned with historical archaeology? I suppose the answer lies in what the extent of its post-colonial development has been, as well as to which period historical archaeology is pegged at. These debates will continue not only in Israel but elsewhere and then, of course, the questions remain. Brooks (2013:1) refers to the “ongoing disciplinary discussions of whether historical archaeology is a matter of European



colonial expansion and capitalism, entails a specific methodology, or whether the term ‘historical archaeology’ itself has any real global meaning as a period-based concept beyond the Americas and Australasia, given the longer historical traditions of the ‘Old World’.”

As we have seen, the prehistorical or non-textual archaeological deposits are huge. The amount of work needed at sites such as Hazor, as an example, is extensive and will occupy archaeologists for decades still to come.

Yet, we see that the colonial powers of the West, such as England and France, who occupied vast territories in the Levant and who were anti-communist, exerted a massive influence in the region. Its scholars laid the foundation for Israeli processual archaeology.

Most archaeologists would agree with this. However, we see this is not always the case, and the pursuance of knowledge is filtered through a societal viewpoint.

It can also manifest into big socio-economic ideologies and traditions that span the borders of mere countries but extends into economic systems on a global scale such as capitalism or socialism. For example, the development and the current situation in archaeology are very dependent on the political and economic goodwill of the authorities and sponsors. As Gillot (2010:4) points out:

No longer is archaeology regarded as a neutral or a purely scientific discipline, but as a process influenced by the aims of its practitioners, who are, in turn, deeply affected by contemporary intellectual, social, and political agendas. As well, research undertaken on archaeological practice in non-western settings, that is closely related to colonial issues, has highlighted how archaeology could be a tool of scientific, cultural, political, and socio-economic domination. Indeed, in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, the past has been deployed by Western archaeologists to construct the non-West, to forge a cultural lineage to the West ...

Here we see the “playing off” of “one group” of nations against the “other” and in this case the West versus the Middle Eastern Arabic nations, or one set of religious ideology and dogma against another set of another religious ideology. Bahrani (1998:166) indicates the following:

‘[T]he torch of civilisation’ was passed from Mesopotamia to Europe via the two ‘Easter ethnicities’ that are acceptable to the West: Greeks and Jews. Paradoxically, in the two main sources of the Western cultural narrative, Classical texts and the Bible, the Assyrians and the Babylonians and their successors, the Persians, are the hostile Other, presenting a constant threat to the political freedom of democracy and the worship of the true God. The earliest archaeological expeditions to Mesopotamia then were unambiguous in defining the purposes of their mission.

In addition, we see that this necessitates an overtly reliance on economic funders, and I would argue that, with this reshaping of the narrative and through the linkage to the West, we see the economic structure of capitalism emerging as an enticement for capital to flow into and out of heritage studies and archaeology. As Hamilakis (2007:16) points out:

[M]odernity is primarily the era of commodities, the era of equivalence, exchange and capitalism. It is also the era of national imagination, that is, the formation of a new imaginary way of organising space and time, based on homogenisation and easy communication and mobility, essential elements for the development of capital.

I believe it is the dilemma of all sciences, be they hard science or the human sciences. Earlier I mentioned the vestiges of the past in the form of relics. During the early years of biblical archaeology, we see scholars seeking for the famed walls of Jericho as in the biblical tradition. Attributed to these relics were the memories of a supernatural occurrence and the subsequent capture of a city.

However, there were revolutionary ideas from scholars who moved away from biblical texts and strict theological dogma. We see that already in the 1960s, George Mendenhall, a student of Albright, basically destroyed any Israelite ‘conquest theory’, arguing rather for a peasant revolt based on religious ideology. Mendenhall’s theory was attractive, but unfortunately it did not have a sound archaeological base and was thus viewed with scepticism. At the end of 1970, Norman Gottwald took a more liberal approach and, as a committed scholar of Marxism, postulated a social revolution that was born from dissatisfaction among Canaanites in the city-states, adopted the single deity Yahweh and slowly emerged as the early Israelites. According to Dever (2003:53,54), this was unfortunately ignored by the “parochial as usual” archaeological fraternity.

Archaeology has moved on since those early days and, as Ze’ev Herzog from Tel Aviv University points out, archaeology in Israel has gone through a paradigm shift. He holds the following view: “The paradigmatic shift centres on the liberation of this archaeology from the biblical approach, which limited its boundaries, and on the movement toward a social approach which broadens its horizons” (Herzog 2019).

This view is still held, and there is merit in it. Archaeology at academic institutions, such as Tel Aviv University, is very much guided by the same principles and view that Herzog holds. In an interview with Ze’ev Herzog in 2019, he points out that as a young student he remembers identifying with the romantic idea that they needed to find a route in the country.

The reason for this is so that they can come back to the country and that archaeology will be one of the tools to build a new identity.

The question of it is based on possible nationalistic principles, which were prevalent during those days and are an accepted fact. Herzog (2019) believes that “in a way ... most, if not all, archaeologists accept this view in this area of research”. He also remembers writing in a paper that they believed at that stage that biblical archaeology fulfils its purpose, and they found many indications and proof of the historicity of stories written in the Bible. He further states:

This was in a way a reply to the German 19th-century biblical criticism, that Wellhausen had. It criticised the historicity and considered many parts of the biblical stories as ahistorical. Albright was the main founder of the strength to bring back the facts, to prove the historicity by excavations and collecting the artefacts to support this view. This was quite a powerful situation, which everyone subscribed to.

He further reports that he believes that

... in the 1980s, as in the rest of the world, there was a trend of new archaeology which influenced the more critical view and the facts. The local archaeology also had quite a growing number of cases in which they found contradictions between the biblical stories and the archaeology, for example, the excavations of Jericho with no city, no walls and all the conquests of the city (Herzog 2019).

According to him, this “drove the criticism and a whole new trend – and it did not come from a non-nationalistic lobby – it came from a more critical and scholarly driven scientific view of the situation” (Herzog 2019). The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 undoubtedly set the course of Israeli archaeology on a political journey of influence; however, it is certainly not unique to any specific region or country. It is rather the effects of such historical and landscape engineering that cause discomfort and anger. What is, however, unique about the region is that this history was and still is to some extent based upon religious text and indeed characters from the past.

History and ideology cannot be separated, as Solimani (2019) explains: “History and ideology are always together. Archaeology and nationalism are born together, and they are mixed up together ...” It is not an Israeli patent. It’s been part of nation building – “when people started to identify themselves through the nation” and believe that they “belong to one nation, historically and history, and share the same history”. They realise that “if they want to own the past, they need the monuments to tell that this is our land”. He emphasises: “It is a European movement; it started in Europe. So, they brought all this build-in wisdom when they came here. And they choose to do it here to fulfil the ideology as the Jewish did.

So, archaeology and nationalism generally go together – everywhere – and you can see it in every country.” Solimani relates the following about Yadin and all his projects:

[T]he main one was the Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion – he was the founder of the State of Israel. For him the narrative and the connection to the Bible and the interpretation of the archaeological finds through the Bible has been very strong and on this, he was willing to build the new modern Jewish Israeli identity.

Solimani worked in Ramat Rachel, an archaeological site south of Jerusalem, and explains: “It is a site that was dug by Professor Yohanan Aharoni in the 1950s and 1960s. And they identify it as a palace of the Kingdom of Judea ...” Solimani became worried because they wanted to make it an archaeological find. He went to the old find to look for something and then he saw and found the letters, exchanging letters between the Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and Aharoni about the interpretation of this site. According to him, “it was a very close contact between the two, and he was amazed about everything they discussed about what is the interpretation for the Bible and so on” (Solimani 2019). The question he asks is: “What is going on now ... was this relation of archaeology and nationalism only in the beginning of the Israeli state and as the new state? Or it is still going on until today? However, it is also very scientific today.”

As mentioned before, one needs to look at the contextual relationship between the time as well as space of the archaeological investigation. In short, the early biblical archaeologists made tremendous strides forward as far as the archaeology of the region and particularly Israeli archaeology is concerned. Ussishkin (2019) holds the view that the Yadin era was a great period. He was a student then and did his doctorate under him. He also worked with him. According to him,

Yadin didn't only deal with biblical archaeology. He is no less important, he worked with later periods like Masada and so forth. And of course, his work on the scrolls, which were amazing what he managed to do. But as far as biblical archaeology was, he was a clear student of Albright who believed that the Albright concept was a very good, very orthodox Christian concept. Albright believed quite clearly in the biblical text, starting from the time of the patriarchs and before. The method Albright used was to take what happened as a biblical story and the archaeology and then use it as a jigsaw puzzle. You something here and you find something there, and you stick it to the biblical story to see if it fits.

Ussishkin (2019) further reports:

Yadin worked according to the same concept. But to understand Yadin, one must also understand the times of the nation, Israel at the time and his role as army commander and so on however, the Yadin era has passed already, it has died 50 years ago. The situation today is much different, but Yadin used Albright's concept ... take archaeology as a jigsaw puzzle and adapt it to the text.

Yadin and Albright were great people, they worked at a time when the volume of archaeological and historical data was much less than today, and they managed to combine everything. Who can today work like Yadin on the Hebrew scrolls on the one hand and archaeology on the other? Ussishkin believes “nobody can do it? A single person can’t do it”.

Ben Tor (2019) is of the opinion that ideology and nationalism do play a part in archaeological interpretation but that it was much more prevalent during the 1940s and the 1950s than it is today. Religion also played a part in interpretation but much less by the secular scholars. To that end, he concurs with Ussishkin that Yadin has made a massive contribution to Israeli archaeology and indeed to archaeology as a whole and that his contribution is not yet fully appreciated.

### 2.1.2 Colonialism

To a large degree, we can formulate the archaeology of the greater Levantine region as that of imperialism and the playground for adventurous men and some woman to live out the exotic and swashbuckling lifestyle of the Orient. Treasures in the form of artefacts and biblical references in the form of monuments and palaces beckoned those who had the stomach for it. Coupled with the search for biblical textual corroboration and economic gains, as well as the expansion of their empires, countries such as England, France, America and Germany sent numerous expeditions to Palestine and Mesopotamia. Among those first pioneers, and with the sanction of the Queen of England during the Victorian era, were Henry Layard. The sole purpose of these expeditions to the Orient was ideologically and economically driven through the expansion of British terrain. Below is a quote from Henry Layard (Malley 2008:629):

During the autumn of 1839 and winter of 1840, I had been wandering through Asia Minor and Syria, scarcely leaving untrod one spot hallowed by tradition, or unvisited one ruin consecrated by history. I was accompanied by one no less curious and enthusiastic as myself. We were both equally careless of comfort and unmindful of danger. We rode alone; our arms were our only protection; a valise behind our saddles was our wardrobe luxuries, and uninfluenced by the opinions and prejudices of others, we mixed among the people, acquired without effort their manners, and enjoyed without alloy those emotions which scenes so novel, and spots so rich in varied association, cannot fail to produce.

Malley (2008:629) comments as follows:

This passage is a virtual compendium of the latent pleasures of British agency in the East, the simple pleasures of movement, the tingle of danger, the nostalgic yearnings for what has passed, the delight in going native, and the quasi-religious experience of a pilgrimage

to 'hallowed' and 'consecrated' lands. With this conventional expression of the traveller's freedom from civilization, Layard sows the seeds of that very civilization through archaeological knowledge of the terrain and ethnographic mastery of its inhabitants.

There is, however, a less honourable enticement of knowledge and adventure that motivated early archaeologists to explore the Near East and the broader Middle East. Taha (2019) explains:

It was treasure hunting. The objects have an intrinsic value and, therefore, this phenomenon from Egypt was known, it was the phenomenon that there are graves that have been looted and there were measures taken to prevent it because people deploy part of their lives in their tombs and they think it was one of the targets for people who are seeking to get this part of wealth. Looting was a common phenomenon. People looting for metal, for gold, and other things were simply smashed. It was to a point that there were government-imposed customs on looters.

Taha believes it was probably the biblical archaeologists in a way who started this in Palestine. They were looking for something different than objects. According to him, "they were looking for objects in a way to understand the Bible, ... they had their motivation to understand the past, and ... that was formerly identified in the protocol of the Palestine Exploration Fund. And society understands the archaeology, geography, history and customs of the people of the Holy Land." He also believes that "all these steps have contributed to accumulating knowledge. Even the first excavation in our land can be viewed as looting or demolishing of the site because there was no clear methodology for recovering the past, but without it, it was never possible to develop the science."

It is noted by Hamilakis (2005:96) that, despite efforts by the global archaeological community to decolonise the discipline, in the past the West lay claim to archaeological remains as 'their' past. In other words, anybody outside of this 'civilisation' was inferior and uncivilised.

Hamilakis (2005:96) holds the following opinion:

New forms of colonialism and imperialism are now making advances, and Eurocentric ideologies and practises, in archaeology and elsewhere, are still dominant. How is this organisation, and the archaeological community overall, to react and position itself in the colonial present? In Iraq, the Western archaeological community has failed catastrophically. It acted primarily as an advocate of the "archaeological record" of the Mesopotamian past which was described as "the cradle of civilization": a racist neo-evolutionist notion that equates "civilization" with the invention of literacy and the development of urbanism, thus rendering as "uncivilized" – even "barbarian" – peoples and cultures that do not possess these features.

Hamilakis (2005) also notes that the neo-colonialism and Eurocentrism have sifted through the decades since colonialism and manifested itself again during the conflict of the Iraqi war. He says:

Interestingly, these terms were used at the same time by the Western leaders that invaded Iraq. The Western archaeological community also pronounced the Mesopotamian past 'our past'; thus performing an act of symbolic appropriation. It lamented the looting of the Baghdad museum and of the archaeological sites, yet very few of its members explicitly opposed the illegal invasion and occupation, although undoubtedly some saw in their advocacy of the record and the emphasis on looting an indirect means of opposing the war" (Hamilakis 2005:96).

The footprint of colonialism and its influence on archaeology remain part of the discourse as it will also remain a criticism against Western archaeology not only in Israel but also in the rest of the world. As Maeir (2019) noted during our discussion: "Archaeology in the Near East is one of the final dying manifestations of Western colonialism."

There is thus much discussion and work needed by organisations such as the World Archaeological Congress (WAC), specifically geared towards addressing issues such as mentioned above and, as Hamilakis (2005:95) points out, "... advocate the importance of an engaged and value-committed archaeology".

### 2.1.3 Zionism, post-Zionism and archaeology in Israel

The role of Zionism cannot be underestimated in the writing of the history of the Israelis, and neither can the role of the Arab identity be underestimated in the writing of the Palestinian history. Add to this the opposing religions of Judaism and the Muslim faiths and add the expectations of Christian doctrine and ambitions to protect the faith, which were held by the colonial powers of Europe, as well as the strategic importance of the Middle East, and you get a volatile mix consisting of opposing ideologies.

The archaeology of the region was formalised and driven by William Foxwell Albright who taught many of the top archaeologists who would later rise to prominence in the field. Although Albright held various views over the many decades, his teachings were essentially the foundation of biblical archaeology in Israel, as Cline (2009:31) explains:

Albright is frequently referred to as the 'dean of biblical archaeology,' in part because of the sheer quantity of his writings, the large number of graduate students whom he trained, and his insistence that the Bible was essentially correct, from a historical point of view, and that the archaeology could be used to prove it.

The shaping of a nationalistic ethos and identity of Israel was largely spearheaded by David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel in the beginning years. The combination of Christian archaeologists in the William Albright tradition and the early Israeli archaeologists led by the likes of Yigal Yadin, Benjamin Mazar and Yohanan Aharoni, in their turn, spearheaded the archaeological tradition of linking the biblical text with the archaeological artefacts and its interpretation (Amit 2016:2).

As pointed out by Amit (2016:2), the combination of Christian archaeology and Zionist archaeology cannot be separated in those early years, and it was only with the advent of liberation theology and the minimalist tradition that the debate became heated. Both these opposing streams cannot exclusively claim unbiased interpretation and theorisation. We see that the maximalists, those who support the validity of the biblical narrative as history, and the minimalists who defend the position that the biblical narrative dates only from the period post the exile from Babylon, are accused of being pro-Palestinian in a political sense. As Amit (2016:4) points out:

Biblical archaeology is part of the war of narratives between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Zionist-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian identities play a major role in the construction of expectations, assumptions, theoretical biases, and interpretation of data. The Palestinian side, of course, is biased towards biblical minimalism. Palestinian archaeologists, such as Hani Nur el-Din and Jalal Kazzouh, reject the Zionist archaeology and identify continuity between the Palestinians and the Canaanites. Others, like Hamden Taha, do not accept this identification of the Palestinians with the Canaanites and claim that it is just a response to the Israeli practice of archaeology.

Sarie (2019) argues that the “Zionist” goal was usurped by colonial empires and was a combination of clever manoeuvring with ideology, religion and land by the West. He explains:

It is the geography here. Nothing but geography, and the creation of this old biblical narrative and to put it forward as a real solid combination and most certainly driven by the Western world and continuously reemphasising it. It is the basis for the creation of the Zionist movement.

He further contends: “The basis for colonisation and the creation of Israel worked in two ways. First, they get rid of the Jews from Europe as Europe has never been really tolerant as it is a Christian world. In a Christian world, they were not tolerant of them in certain ways.” So, “you get rid of them and then they divided the other enemy which is the Arab nations, and they were put in the middle with the West and the East. It is geography, it is political geography,” Sarie (2019) explains.



When I interviewed Handan Taha in Ramallah (Taha 2019), the following point was highlighted: “archaeology was usurped by ideology and used as an instrument to serve political plans and supplement projects. Archaeology was used to justify the Zionist colonial project in Palestine from the beginning.” I would say the role of the biblical archaeologists and scholars and its relationship with the land was ‘formally’ established after the Balfour declaration.

However, it is not a blank statement and Taha recognises the separation between the various archaeologists and the minimalist or maximalist points of view, and these have been noted and recognised by the Palestinian archaeological fraternity. Taha (2019) points out that he has noticed that I have spoken to Ze’ev Herzog. He thinks he has his own critical views, and, in a way, he has respect for this. Israel Finkelstein as well. They have their own school of thinking. Moreover, he thinks there are some others “with influential voices against the radical mainstream of the establishment, the government and the political entities as represented by the Israeli official institutions and antiquities authority and of some universities.” But he also believes there are some very political views and some people who decide not to be political, such as Raz Kletter. He thinks he is representing and adding a great value in this debate. He probably thinks outside of the political agenda, but maybe it is an attempt to understand the truth. Taha (2019) recognises the importance of a group of Israeli archaeologists who are in opposition to the mainstream ideologically driven and non-scientific interpretations, as follows:

I think it is important to highlight the role of this critical group, no matter how small it is. I think it can grow in the future. The people do not want to live a life with a lie. People need to be freed. There is a sentence in the New Testament which state that the truth will set you free.

At the opposite side of this approach, he contends that it is “an enemy. Human ignorance. This ideology is completely shared by ignorance and I think it is a deliberate act working on the level of rationality.”

In answer to the splitting of the historicity of the Israeli and Palestinian, the road is open for discussion but there must be an indication to open the dialogue between these historical poles. Taha (2019) points out: “Palestinian history is declared as a universal history and it has been written by biblical archaeologists who are coming from afar.” He does not want to see a consensus but rather a push for “rational understanding where the archaeology is viewed as a common heritage, rather than a land or area of dispute, and the archaeology not

used to divide.” He explains that “this is because the vision is coming from an ideological point of view and is not coming from a historical argument”.

The pervasiveness of ideology within archaeology as viewed by Taha (2019) is also corroborated by Scham (1998:306) as follows:

[T]here is a need for a “court of conscience” in archaeology where suspect actions can be discussed and interpreted in accordance with established principles of conduct. Unless we are audacious enough to create such an institution within our profession, we will have to accept the continuing manipulation of archaeology for nationalist goals.

We know that since the publication of this article there have been many debates on the impact of ideology and archaeology, whatever form this ideology might be, but according to Taha (2019), the influence remains, and he contends as follows: “Archaeology is used to divide. It has been used already to produce a narrative negating the other. And it has been used to produce an exclusive narrative. Centred on one component, one aspect and negating the other.”

He rather believes that an inclusive narrative must be enforced. A narrative that takes into consideration all aspects or groups or communities who live in this land. And as an archaeologist, as a man who is working in history, he does not have any difficulty with that. In all his publications he has focused on the fact “that Palestinian history includes and should be viewed as an integral part of the history of the past and should be used as an integral part of the history”. All strata of the living and religious components, including in particular the Bible, are an integral part of the Palestinian history. They use archaeology, but the archaeology is not the problem itself, neither is the history the problem, “it is the way how it is manipulated and how people are then manipulated and how the plea for the minds of the people is continuing to go on”.

The issue that I noted during my discussions was that of the unfortunate outcome of the intersection of the archaeology of Israel and especially the current contentious City of David excavations, which directly affects the present Palestinians who are part of the history of Jerusalem. Taha (2019) argues on this point as follows: “Even if the land is divided for political reason, history is undividable. Even if taking out a two-state solution which is now facing great difficulty. In a way people should acknowledge that the history and archaeology of a country cannot be divided by political boundaries.” But throughout history, there were “certain and different periods, different political entities, and that is not new, so we knew

that in the past, in the classical period, there was different patronage that was introduced as the Kingdom of Israel”. He illustrates further as follows:

It remained for a time and later they were under the Greeks during the Hellenistic period, and this had serious impacts for Palestine, and later on again in the setting of political boundaries as we know and as identified in 1948. Even before the boundaries of 1948, there were the Edomites and the Nabataeans in the south, so it is not a new situation. Therefore, the point is to view the past for the present and as well as the future.

Regardless of the biblical context and the dominance of Iron Age excavations that have taken place in the past Palestine region and modern-day Israel, including occupied territories over the decades, there is still a distinct polarity present in the mainstream archaeology of the region. It is still left and right. In my view, this distinction is driven by a notion of not necessarily ‘what’ you are excavating, but rather ‘why’ you are excavating that particular site and what you want to prove. It may be an oversimplification on my part, but it appears so. During my research trip and conversations, this came to the fore. I once again state that the archaeological methods used in Israel are most probably the best in the world and for a small country with so many universities offering a course in archaeology, this is indeed an accomplishment. Yet, this polarity remains prevalent, no matter how subtle this difference is, how interwoven this socialisation of the discipline of archaeology on the landscape is and how it comes forth in the discourse.

An interesting observation by Herzog (2019) is made about the perception by some of the citizens of Israel that land ownership is based on the now-defunct “conquest theory”. He explains: “Here we come to a political view ... most archaeologists will study the question of the conquest archaeologically and scientifically without any prejudice.” According to him, there are groups, especially the Settlers, the right-wing Settlers, who would very much like to think of ideology and their presence in the occupied territories. They would say that once before they have conquered the country, they have the right and now they would resettle the land. It is according to the rights of the old Israelites and the biblical narrative – the 31 cities conquered by Joshua. When you verify the archaeology, you will see that there were no fortifications, no fortified city to conquer. Herzog further states:

In most of them there is no destruction. There is no major destruction – if there is destruction, it is not by a single wave of conquest, but different phases. Thus, there is no support in the archaeological data to the conquest theory. You may try to support it as much as you can, but you will not find anything.

Regardless of the views of archaeologists on this issue, the public perception and politics would determine the discourse and in so doing would inflame the settler issue further.

Herzog (2019) believes that there should be a clear distinction made between biblical studies and archaeology. What is evident is that popular media and the opponents of the archaeology in Israel benefit from the status quo. During our discussion, I referred to the popular media and scholars from the Copenhagen School claiming that some archaeologists in Israel are trying to maintain the status quo. Herzog (2019) explains:

Many people relate to the Copenhagen School of minimalists as it is called by some. They are not archaeologists, and their biblical scholars study the Bible, which I appreciate because they get involved in archaeology. Biblical studies are a very important scientific field, and they do use archaeology in a way, but archaeology is not dependent on them. It is independent. Some of the critics try to connect them, which is, in my opinion, wrong. We are both critical, but we base our criticism on archaeology and on the Bible, which is much more difficult as there are so many different interpretations.

Dever (1998:40) concurs that the archaeology and biblical historical sources are to be used to gain knowledge, regardless of the subjective nature of interpretation, but the flaws in this subjectivity should not hamper the study of the past, or for that matter try to erase history as they believe the ‘revisionists’ seems to be advocating. He argues:

[T]here is no such thing as “objectivity” in archaeological, historical, or biblical studies. History is a “tale told for a specific purpose.” Thus, we construct the past that we need, partly out of what I have called “a nostalgia for a biblical world that never was.” Yet the limitations on our knowledge of the past do not mean that no certain knowledge can be obtained, that nothing can be said about or learned from the past, as we shall see. The first mistake the “revisionists” make is that they state a commonplace historiographical principle as though they had invented it – all history writing is “subjective” – then carry it to ridiculous lengths. This is a parade example of the logical fallacy of *reductio ad absurdum*.

In this regard, Amit (2016:7) observes:

[M]ost Israeli archaeologists belong to the mainstream of Zionism. However, this does not mean that their work is not influenced by socio-political and cultural aspects. Contemporary Zionist archaeologists are much less sceptical towards the Bible, in comparison to the pro-Palestinian non-Jewish minimalists in Europe, to the Palestinians themselves and to Israeli post-Zionists. Moreover, even between the Schools of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem there are differences that relate to socio-political issues, as Meir reluctantly admitted. Ze’ev Herzog is on one side: he identifies with the new historians and is more sceptical towards the Bible than the previous generation of Zionist archaeologists. Eilat Mazar is on the other side: her work reflects the nationalistic view and she carries on the legacy of the previous generation ....

When I asked Mizrahi (2019) from Emek Shaveh whether he believes that the Iron Age still dominates the archaeology in modern-day Israel, he had the following to say: “For religious Jews, the Second Temple period is more important and this is the period that they want to study. Although the Iron Age archaeology is very important and interesting, the Iron Age archaeology was more for the Israeli secular people during the 1950s and the 1960s.” He explains that there is currently a shift to the Second Temple period.

Eilat Mazar excavating in Jerusalem are dealing with the Iron Age, but the Iron Age is also dealing with something else. The Iron Age is also very important to the evangelical groups. I do not know if they are popular in South Africa, but they are very popular in Latin America and America. These groups are still very interested in the biblical land. They have taken it to a new level, and I think the authorities in some instances support this, but I'm not in agreement with this relationship (Mizrahi 2019).

During my conversations with Alex Fantalkin (2019), I asked whether there was something to be said for the hereditary lines between the ancient inhabitants, such as the Canaanites, and the Israelites and Palestinian peoples, and the historically shared links to the region. If this was the case, then there should be no problem. Finkelstein (as cited in Amit 2016:9) alludes to this as follows:

The debate over our right to the land is ridiculous. As though there is some international committee in Geneva that considers the history of peoples. Two peoples come and one says, "I have been here since the 10th century BCE", and the other says, "No, he's lying, he has only been here since the ninth century BCE." What will they do – evict him? Tell him to start packing? In any event, our cultural heritage goes back to these periods, so this whole story is nonsense ... And let us say that there was no exodus from Egypt and that there was no great and magnificent united monarchy, and that we are actually Canaanites. So, in terms of rights, we are okay, aren't we?

According to some scholars, and in sharp contrast, the Copenhagen minimalists who argue more from a geopolitical point of view, may be forgiven if the exclusion of Jewishness from the region is the first objective in some of these arguments. In opposition to this extreme minimalism, Finkelstein's moderate minimalistic approach to archaeology and history is critiqued by Amit (2016:10) as follows:

In his books, lectures and interviews, Finkelstein always emphasizes that he strongly believes in the "complete separation" between faith, tradition and archaeological research. Finkelstein does not rule out the theology of the Bible, which is incredibly exciting to him. It is important to Finkelstein that his Israeli audience would know how much he is proud of the Jewish tradition and does not try to undermine it. Through an extraordinary outburst of creativity, he claims, the inhabitants of Judah in the late Monarchic period produced the founding document of Judaism and Christianity. Nonetheless, since identity is a threat to objectivity and research is a threat to identity, Finkelstein's solution is to insist on the above separation which "releases the tension.

Two important sites near the Khirbet Qeiyafa are the Valley of Elah and the City of David site in Jerusalem. These sites are at the centre of the debates between the scholars of two universities, namely the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv University. The former, according to Amit (2016:18), is more conservative and the latter less so and takes a position between extreme minimalism and maximalism. Israel Finkelstein leads the school of thought at Tel Aviv and in opposition are Garfinkel and Eilat Mazar at the Hebrew University. Without going into the actual archaeological methodologies, the debate can be fierce, as highlighted by Amit (2016:20-21):

Power, authority, academic politics, and budgets also play a role in the struggle between the schools of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. When Garfinkel was accused by Yuval Goren and Oded Lipschits from Tel Aviv University of digging at Tel Socoh without a permit, he denied it and claimed that ever since he destroyed the minimalist theories of the Tel Aviv School by finding a fortified city in Qeiyafa, the archaeologists of this school are trying to harass him and “instead of having scientific debate they use dirty tricks.

Garfinkel described Finkelstein as a dictator and claimed that he is behind this persecution: “The Tel Aviv school is trying to obstruct us. Don’t think that they have scientific freedom there. Finkelstein organizes them.”

In contrast to the above, in my interview with Fantalkin (2019) at Tel Aviv University, the explanation of identity in the archaeology is based on a measured and balanced approach, and the interpretation must follow the excavation results. He states as follows: “The scepticism about and defined ethnicity is also very broad; it is widespread. So, the whole question about identifying ethnicity in the archaeological record is very tricky.” Therefore, according to him, “the archaeologists all around the world are faced with the same dilemma. How do you identify Greek or Phoenician? What is ethnicity at all? Can you speak in terms of common heritage and ethnicity? Or do you rather speak in terms of city identification? For Phoenicians for sure, the city identification was the most crucial ones.” The people of Sidon, Tyre and so on never referred to themselves as Phoenicians, but they were called Phoenicians by the Greeks. Thus, “not always, but in many cases, an external perspective defines the group and the group finally embraces this,” Fantalkin states. All kinds of status should be indicated to this issue about accumulative ethnicity and all kinds of words, but basically, it is how the average archaeologists view them as a group. “So,” he explains, “Greeks shall overall speak with different dialects, but it is still Greek language, and the identity is Greek as a collective against the others. So, this is something that brings an additional perspective to Pan-Hellenic identity.”

Fantalkin (2019) emphasises that with methodology, it is always shaky. They use this methodology still because they try to “identify how to distinguish between Israelis, the Philistines and Canaanites”. Therefore, they look at the same artefactual evidence. They look at the dwellings, at the mortuary practices, dietary habits and so on, and create rubrics which can be true or not, because people can also shift their identities. But on the other hand, they are not supposed to throw the baby out with the bath water,

... because with identities and in the collective, identities in antiquity, you can see there is a case to be made. You can also see it in the text, you can see it in the Egyptian perspective. Merenptah’s stele says that he destroyed Israel and it seems that it no longer exists. He is talking about some group of people or tribes who label them as Israelites

even if they do not see themselves as Israelites. The Egyptians see them as Israelites, so in a way, it is not too farfetched to try to find out if there is an accord of this past cultural identities in the material culture. It is not always possible, but an attempt should be made to find out.

The observations made by Fantalkin (2019), which I would refer to as the continuous machination of empire building and geopolitical engineering, also align with the following observation by Kohl (1998:236):

Nation-states that have risen out of the ruins of empire face their own peculiar problems of constructing their national identities. One common difficulty is that the borders they inherit frequently correspond to colonial administrative units and contain multiple ethnic groups, none of which could function unproblematically as the new nationality. Archaeology can be implicated in these processes.

I believe this is the case in Israel and that these identities are further conflicted over the issue of land and religion. The history of the original inhabitants is thus in a continuous state of flux and in an identity crisis. The archaeological search for identity and cultural markers is therefore problematic but should not, however, be ceased because of this.

Fantalkin (2019) further states on identity:

They are Canaanites who have simply changed their identity, started to be identified later as Israelites, but we are talking about Canaanites without any significant movement from outside. This kind of ideas is for decades being circulated and taught in universities. This is the kind of ideas that the students are discussing in Israel. They are talking about pastoralists who are suddenly changing the ways of life, because of certain circumstances, but they are the same Canaanites which is not foreign to the area. It all started with theories from Mendenhall and Gottwald. They believed Israelites are Canaanite peasants who revolted against their masters and moved to the mountains.

Fantalkin (2019) says,

[Because of] these environmental and social circumstances, they changed their way of life, and suddenly everybody sees this. They are visible in the archaeological record, and they become Israel eventually. One can say that Israelites are Canaanites who changed their identity. Canaanites from a certain geographic region that had to reinvent themselves anew because of the circumstances.

Fantalkin talks about more “central highlands – Samaria, Jerusalem, Hebron, all these hamlets and villages that suddenly popped up in the early Iron Age”. He believes that if they are all Canaanites, it is also a mixture with some influence from outside as well. But discussions seem to be very academic. He also thinks that declaring in a way that Israelis are Canaanites is a very powerful statement. For him, it is like cutting out the myth of the conquest but creating another myth of Israelis being an integral part of the place from the beginning – from time immemorial.

The City of David excavation in Jerusalem is a controversial subject among archaeologists in Israel. Eilat Mazar is the director of this excavation. Mazar believes that she has discovered the traces of the palace of David, based on the finding of a large stone structure and pottery dating from the Iron I period. Besides, it also mimics pottery assemblages from Giloh and Shiloh (Finkelstein et al. 2007:144,148). Fellow scholars criticised her archaeological interpretation and historical interpretation. Finkelstein et al. (2007:161, 162) state that,

[T]he main find – the ‘Large Stone Structure’ – was not properly interpreted and dated. First, it seems to consist of several elements, mainly a rectangular building in the west and the city wall in the east. Second, all one can safely say is that its various elements post-date the late Iron I/early Iron IIA and predate the Roman period. Circumstantial evidence seems to suggest the dating of most elements to the late Hellenistic period.

They further contend:

Beyond archaeology, one wonders about the interpretation of the finds. The biblical text dominates this field operation, not archaeology. Had it not been for Mazar’s literal reading of the biblical text, she never would have dated the remains to the 10th century BCE with such confidence. This is an excellent example of the weakness of the traditional, highly literal, biblical archaeology — a discipline that dominated research until the 1960s, that was weakened and almost disappeared from the scene in the later years of the 20th century, and that re-emerged with all its attributes in the City of David in 2005 (Finkelstein et al. 2007:162).

To a large extent, the search for the palace of David reflects the use of religious text, and its protagonists and critics pose a problem for Israeli archaeology, given that the media has picked up on this. When I posed the question whether there is still a reliance on the biblical text in scholarship and archaeology at Tel Aviv University, Ze’ev Herzog had the following to say: “There will be arguments within archaeology. There are arguments, especially about the United Monarchy. Most of the archaeologists agreed that the questions about the flood and the patriarchs, the patriarch stories, and even the bondage in Egypt and the Exodus, are legendary and not historically accepted.”

As asked by Finkelstein and Silberman (2002:65):

Can we say that the Exodus, the wandering, and – most important of all – the giving of the Law on Sinai do not possess even a kernel of truth? So many historical and geographical elements from so many periods may have been embedded in the Exodus story that it is hard to decide on a single unique period in which something like it might have occurred.

They also comment that “[t]he Bible may reflect New Kingdom reality, but it might just as well reflect later conditions in the Iron Age, closer to the time when the Exodus narrative was put in writing”.



In other words, the Exodus story may well be a compilation of various memories reflecting suffering and a search for freedom and “national resistance against the powers that be” (Finkelstein & Silberman 2002:71).

Herzog (2019) elaborate as follows:

The conquest is half and half, but the arguments focus in recent years on the questions of the so-called United Monarchy of the kingdom of David and Solomon. This criticism was quite revolutionary for the general public in respect of criticising the historicity and for many archaeologists, including Amihai Mazar. Nowadays there is also the great argument and debate whether some archaeologists did find evidence and proof to the existence of the kingdom or empire of David and Solomon. Those who support it are not religious archaeologists.

In Herzog’s (2019) view they would like to bring new evidence – contradicting evidence – to the criticism of the inexistence of the archaeological basis for this period. He believes it is rather a question of ego than a scientific question. It is human – they want to bring new data, facts and ideas, and they support it, but it does not come from religion and nationalists. Herzog emphasises that “the case is from the Hebrew university – Yossi Garfinkel and Eilat Mazar in Jerusalem. They are two strong supporters of this presence. Garfinkel found the city, the fortified city, of King David and Mazar believes that she found a palace of King David in Jerusalem.” Herzog thinks they are both wrong, but still, the question was whether it is from religious or nationalistic ideology, and he believes that it is not. According to him, it is a personal interest in the topic.

Notwithstanding these opposing views by her peers, Mazar does not mince words when confronted with the possibility that this result is flawed, as illustrated by her claims and beliefs that the Bible is a historical source and a guide for archaeologists to use. In addition, the nationalistic ideology also forms part of her interpretation, as pointed out by Amit (2016:12):

Mazar is guided by a maximalist reading of the Bible. Her Jewish-Zionist identity shaped her theoretical assumptions, expectations, and the importance she gives to the finding of the great kingdom of two national and international mythical heroes – David and Solomon. Mazar claims that her work reveals “the importance of the Bible as a marvellous historical source that embodies a wealth of authentic historical accounts.” For her, both the Bible and the remains of the construction in Jerusalem “are engraved in the root of our existence and from them, we suckle our national strength.” She defines her archaeological work as “a personal umbilical cord between me and the ancient history of the people of Israel in the Land of Israel.

The search for the palace of David by Eilat Mazar will consequently continue despite the views of two respected archaeologists such as Finkelstein and Silberman (2007:17) who argue:

The first obvious challenge in assessing the historical reliability of David and Solomon stories is to determine the precise date of their reigns. This must be based on evidence within the Bible, for we do not possess any contemporary references to David and Solomon on well-dated inscriptions from archaeological excavations in Israel or from the neighbouring civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. We must rely – with due caution – on the chronological clues preserved in the Deuteronomistic History.

The Deuteronomistic history describes the *systematic* history of Israel from the time of Moses to the exile. Boshoff et al. (2011:155) explain: “While Lamentations is a *primal reaction* of a left-behind individual (or small group of individuals) shortly after the deportation of 586 BCE, we here see the events described from the perspective 25 years after the event. Like Lamentations, the Deuteronomist gives evidence of the pain caused by tremendous destruction (cf 2 Kings 25:13).” He also says: “The Deuteronomist addressed people who had been in exile for so long that they had lost all hope. In Babylonia, the exiles had to witness the public worship of Babylonian gods (Is 46:1-7) and the international *dominance* of the Babylonian empire. Yahweh, the God of Israel, appeared *powerless*” (Boshoff et al. 2011:155). The Deuteronomist history therefore also includes references to the kings of Israel.

However, in an article posted by Thomas Thompson (2011), he reflects on the Deuteronomistic approach still present in the book of Finkelstein and Silberman (2007), *David and Solomon*, as follows:

The authors attempt to confirm the history of the redaction of the biblical narratives about Saul, David and Solomon, involving seven distinct oral and four written strata of tradition. Their argument moreover claims the warrant to assert the historicity of each of these legendary kings of Israel. The present article argues to the contrary that the ‘archaeological evidence’ proposed does not support such a redaction history nor establish the historicity of either the biblical figures or their stories, but that the harmony of biblical and archaeological issues is circular and illegitimate by the standards of historical research. It argues, moreover, that the claim of an oral tradition, reflecting original memories of a historical David or Saul is an entirely unnecessary and unlikely explanation for the origins of both the figures and their tales in the stories of 1-2 Samuel and 1 Kings. It moreover argues that the hypothesis of a redaction history in a succession of four cumulative revisions, beginning in the eighth century and completed in the sixth to fourth century, BCE — lacking as it does reference to a readable text — is neither critical nor falsifiable. Finally, Finkelstein and Silberman's book are judged as an unsuccessful attempt to return to the methods of ‘biblical archaeology’ that were legitimately impeached in the mid-1970s.

Despite the various critiques of the presence of Deuteronomist tradition still purported to be present in biblical archaeology or not, the lack of any other mention to King David in the archaeological record, with the exception of the Tel Dan inscription, then amounts to some degree of presupposition on the part of the Eilat Mazar excavations and the search for the palace of King David in Jerusalem.

Finkelstein and Silberman (2007:267) refer to the many current sites in Jerusalem, which draw hundreds of thousands of tourists annually, as the mere embodiments of fiction and legend:

Some sites in Jerusalem have been connected with David as the result of folktales – and have no historical basis. The traditional Tomb of David on Mount Zion is a medieval structure. The famous Tower of David at Jaffa gate, long an icon for Jewish aspirations to return to the city, was actually built in the sixteenth century, by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, as a minaret for the city’s Ottoman garrison. But with its wealth of ancient remains, buried, or obscured by modern buildings, Jerusalem has never lacked explorer’s intent on discovering authentic, if hidden, evidence of David and Solomon’s glorious reigns.

According to Finkelstein and Silberman (2007:270, 271), a small detail is mentioned, referring to the last line in a passage from 2 Samuel 5:6-8, which deals with David’s campaign against the rulers of the city at that time, and this may corroborate the story of David as a folktale. They point to the following: “The ending of the biblical story with the words ‘Therefore it is said’ seems to support this explanation of a folktale etiology.”

Yet the Copenhagen School has some critique regarding the disputes of scholars such as Finkelstein, who they claim still use the biblical narrative or rather just adjust or “correct” the chronology and narrative (Thompson 2019:64) and in this they remain less critical in the reading and interpretation of the text.

Taking the critique of biblical archaeology a step further, some biblical scholars believe that biblical archaeologists do not do justice to the work done by biblical scholars and do not take into consideration that any new discoveries in biblical scholarship are done on a continuous basis. They refer to the difference between textual and text-free archaeological research, in other words “dirt” archaeology (Moorey 1981:110). Moorey (1981:110) points to the somewhat unhappy relationship:

Whereas biblical scholars, trained in the arts of textual criticism and analysis, have naturally applied them to the documents revealed by archaeology, some have been less ready to apply equally rigorous and equally appropriate standards to the evidence provided by archaeological stratigraphy and typology. At the same time some archaeologists, either unprepared to accept the most authoritative modern interpretations of the biblical text, or too eager to establish the priority of their own discoveries or the truth of some sectarian beliefs, have made extravagant or unwarranted claims easily exposed as facile or fallacious by more sober biblical scholarship.

During my discussions with Ussishkin (2019), he raised the same point, stating that he would have preferred if archaeologists did not make “biblical scholarly” interpretations as it is not their field of expertise and to rather leave this to the biblical scholars instead.

In this regard, Dever (1998:40) holds the same view but also adds neutrality from politics and to abstain from ideological discussions. This is especially important for foreign archaeologists who do excavate in Israel. Indeed, as he wrote in answer to a question I raised: “I do not do ideology” (Dever 2019). Dever (1998:40) explains:

[M]ost of us who are foreign archaeologists have scrupulously avoided involvement in print in Middle Eastern politics. For instance, in thirty-five years of working in that area I do not think that I have ever made a single statement in any publication that reveals a political view, much less a political or religious ideology. Do I have a political position, religious views? Of course, but I try to keep them separate from my scholarship, because these views are subjective and would only interfere. Such efforts at “neutrality” are one of the best hopes for the future of archaeology in this troubled part of the world. It is immensely encouraging that despite all the local tensions, foreign, Israeli, Jordanian, and now real “Palestinian” archaeologists are collaborating quietly but effectively. Yet it is precisely at this point that the “revisionists” pose a threat, not only in their anti-Israel stance, but also in their charge that we archaeologists have “suppressed Palestinian history”.

According to Moorey (1981:114), for biblical scholars, the findings of the biblical archaeologists covering the events in Genesis, Exodus, Joshua and Judges remain controversial in respect of the negation of the *Exodus* and the *Conquest* and notes: “If we remember that such men as David and Solomon have yet to be identified in a contemporary or near contemporary extra-biblical inscription, we appreciate more readily the fallacy of looking to dirt archaeology for precise information on figures as Abraham, Moses or Joshua, whether or not we accept them as historical.”

Indeed, one can understand the turmoil caused by fallacious proclamations by archaeologists that there is no evidence of any of the figures mentioned in the text, given that the whole corpus of biblical faith is entwined with these figures. This also raises questions as well as answers to the rejection of biblical archaeology by the extreme orthodox communities of both the Muslim and Jewish. Certainly, such proclamations will be declared blasphemous and will be met with the violent reaction as we have seen.

The funding of Mazar’s excavation at the City of David comes from Elad and, as Amit (2016:14) points out, an ultraright-wing organisation who are very clear about the nationalistic ideology and the use of archaeology to provide evidence and corroborate and underpin this ideology.

Hamdan Taha (2019) believes that the current debates around the theories of biblical archaeology have moved beyond the scope of archaeology, need to be carefully scrutinised and are complementary to the views held by Finkelstein and Herzog, as he states: “I think

that these are people who set examples for the future and after them, there are people who at a certain point, make the changes. I think a change would not come as a sudden act; it is a combination of efforts of minds.”

The developments around the Western Wall in the Old City and the shifting trends of its symbolism are another interesting phenomenon which can be revealing as far as sacred spaces are concerned and how it intersects with religion, politics and ultimately statehood. We see that initially around two decades into the newly established State of Israel the meaning of the wall changed significantly, depending on the leadership and pressures brought to bear on both archaeology as well as city development and city transfiguration, as Ricca (2010:182) points out:

Possibly worried by the excessive focus on the Temple and its reconstruction, Israel's right-wing governments are attempting to establish fresh bonds between Zionist and religious values. The new public relations offensive is evident in a number of plans, presently at various stages of implementation, whose goal is the revitalization of the reputation and of the city scape of the Jewish Quarter and the Wall plaza.

The intersection of politics, heritage and history are prevalent in this site, which became a symbol for both secular and orthodox Zionists, as Ricca (2010:172) argues: “By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, what had once been a purely ‘religious’ site was being transformed into a nationalist issue, and the Wall began to be celebrated by both orthodox and secular Zionists.” He also states:

The very definition of Israel as a ‘Jewish State’ implies that its national heritage must be a ‘Jewish Heritage’. It can easily follow, then, that all that is not specifically ‘Jewish’ might (or should) be removed. New ‘facts’ can be created that compete with those sought to be minimized – or the urban landscape can simply be demolished and replaced with a more suitable one, as in this case.

What was once a purely religious space was also becoming a symbol of nationalistic statehood. The strength of this space during the human social interaction, reconstruction and political influence has to a large extent been used to rewrite the history of the Old City. The attraction, the pilgrimage, as well as the strength and expertise of Israeli archaeology combined, are a formidable source of history. Solimani (2019) points out:

The IAA oversees all the archaeology and excavations in Israel ... and they are doing many projects, also rescue digs for developments taking place. But they are also very much involved in tourist development sites and as a Jewish, as an Israeli government office, their main concern is to focus on and study and develop actively Israeli narratives and they are very much involved in East Jerusalem. All the archaeology projects are the City of David or the Western Wall and so and they are also involved in excavations elsewhere in the country. The IAA is very much involved and provides the archaeological expertise. I really believe they are professional and doing professional jobs with rescue

digs and other excavations, but from the other side, they care very much for the narrative and the ideological and the identity of Israel.

Jones (2015:336) comments: “There are important implications for how we consider social or cultural analyses in archaeology. If we are to examine human material interactions in the past it is no longer appropriate simply to explain the character of material based on its assumed cultural or social context.” He further contends: “If we instead consider materials as active components of past social or cultural worlds, then the task of social or cultural analysis shifts to understanding how materials interacted with, or intersected with, past peoples.”

This is the responsibility of the archaeological fraternity as well as the custodians of cultural heritage; it cannot presuppose anything about the materials as well as the past that collides with the histories of people who occupied the same space and time. As I have mentioned at the very start of this thesis, unexcavated cultural material remains and artefacts are mute and only get meaning when we as archaeologists, historians or scientists give it meaning upon observation, so does the history and the future of all living things rely on interpretation. Jones (2015:333) points to the following: “... materials, objects or artworks achieve a *derived* form of agency; this is an agency supplied to them by humans by virtue of standing in an indexical relationship.”

Ideological bias would thus stand in the way of such a natural progression between the artefact and the archaeologists and of the identification and interpretation, which is the very foundation of modern archaeological science.

The present approach to archaeology, given the socio-political issues surrounding the archaeology of today in Israel, then needs to consider much and take cognisance of a wider impact it has on the perceptions of both the academe and the heterogeneous makeup of the history of Israel, as well as the population. I would argue that the histories, for example of Jerusalem, cannot have an exclusive archaeological investigation but that the search for the history of Jerusalem should then be mutually inclusive as far as possible. Any deviation from this will result in conflict as we have seen in the history of Jerusalem, regardless of the secular tolerances that are upheld to this day. Whether such bi-lateral projects are possible will depend on the political will of both the Palestinian and Israeli authorities to sanction co-operation.

#### 2.1.4 State of Israel

The Israeli and Palestinian conflict evokes the ire of many, and a solution is necessary. Israel itself faces severe criticism from many countries, yet it remains one of the most visited countries by tourists from all over the globe. When you enter Israel at Ben Gurion Airport, your passport is not stamped lest you pick up problems later when trying to enter another country. This paradoxical situation can best be explained by the fact that Israel, regardless of its internal policies towards the Palestinians regarding one state or a two-state solution, remains an enigmatic country for many people around the world.

The critics of Israel from a South African perspective argue that what worked for South Africa to gain a free democracy, can work in Israel. They argue:

The Palestinian people, united and determined in active struggle, will provide the solution. In the process they will win over progressive Jews in Israel. Just as a united, national liberation struggle of a determined people, reinforced by international solidarity actions, embracing the peaceful weapon of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) – including many academic initiatives- with the vast support of a majority of UN member states won freedom and equality for all South Africans, so too can this be the case in the Holy Land (Dadoo & Osman 2013:xxiii).

Every year students from all over the world come to Israel to visit or to be volunteer excavators at the numerous archaeology projects around the country and to travel to the monumental ancient sites that represent past cultures from various monotheistic religions and former pagan sites. The historical and archaeological diversity, as well as the secular state where all religions are permitted and respected, seems to be a better enticement than that offered by the detractors. I have noticed the multi-cultural diversity of Israeli citizenship. As mentioned before, there is freedom of association, Palestinian students study at universities around the country and all Israeli citizens can vote. Yet the West Bank and Gaza remain a major point of contention. So how did this situation affect archaeology?

From a historical and a textual perspective, the people of Israel can be defined in two ways, either historical Israel or biblical Israel. Mills (1999:2) explains:

This historical narrative, however is, is continually told from a religious perspective; in many ways the main actor on the stage is the invisible, but all powerful, God of Israel. This opens two ways of evaluating the text, as history and as theology. Israel in the first context is a nation living in the northern highlands of Palestine from the late second millennium BCE to the mid-sixth century BCE. In the second setting Israel is a people defined by its religion, especially by its relationship to its patron deity.

Regardless of the current secularity of the State of Israel, I would agree that this played a big role at the beginning stages of biblical archaeology and may well still be in the

‘subconscious’ background of the archaeology of today. It may not be entertained by individual archaeologists, as we have learnt, but it is still embedded in the landscape where excavation takes place. There is no escape from it simply because each occupation layer during the Late Bronze and Iron Age has some perceived link to the biblical text that speaks of that era. This presupposition is relentless in its presence and is not easy to disregard. The character and geographic relationship of the Holy Land still interact with the textual content of the Bible; whether this is fact or fiction, it remains imbedded in the psyche of the people who live and excavate there. This remains a dominant discussion point and discourse even though it might have been consciously pushed into the background by scholars.

The Zionist movement and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel relied on and looked to archaeology, to corroborate the sincerity of the historical roots of the new nation. This is, however, not a unique situation as elsewhere we see the same phenomenon.

Mazar (2019) argues: “There is circles in Israel and other countries who exploit archaeology for their benefits. During the 1950s and 1960s archaeology was to a large extent thought to promote and to throw light on our rights on the country. The state was young – so Yadin looked for Bar Kokhba, the Jewish hero of the second century.” He further explains: “Masada is a symbol of heroism – though it’s not so much heroism to commit suicide, but there are today a kind of deconstruction of this heroism at Masada.” He also emphasises:

[T]here was also a lot of archaeological activity in other fields, prehistoric, Byzantine, Crusader, you name it, and some of these projects were really motivated to by individual scholarship, but this motivation does not find its expression in the publications or in the teaching here at the university. It was a kind of private motivation of persons, of individual scholars during this time, but I don’t think that this motivation exists today.

#### 2.1.5 International foreign policy

The modern international policy relies on three instruments to ensure cooperation and peaceful relations between countries, namely, diplomacy, economic cooperation or boycotts, and if none of the preceding two work, military intervention and occupation.

Uniquely and with extreme prejudice, religious ideology, coupled with military intervention, was most probably the main driving force of the first forays of any Westerners into the Holy Land. We know this from the ideology preached by Pope Urban II that the Holy Land, and in particular Jerusalem, should be cleansed of the Islamic “heathen rulers”, as he proclaimed in 1095 at Clermont in modern-day France. The era of the Crusades was born. Thousands



of people joined from all walks of life, led by nobles who bankrolled the expedition. Their one goal to set free the city of Jerusalem and in doing so win atonement for their sins, as promised by the holy church (Montefiore 2012:248). The religious fervour with which the final attack on Jerusalem and its citizen played out is best described as a massacre driven by fanaticism, as described by an eyewitness. Neither Jews nor Muslims were spared.

Babies were seized from their mothers, their heads dashed against walls. As the barbarity escalated, ‘Saracens, Arabs, and Ethiopians’ – meaning the black Sudanese troops of the Fatimid army – took refuge on the roofs of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa. But as they fought their way towards the Dome, the knights hacked a path across the crowded esplanade, killing and dicing through human flesh until ‘in the Temple [of Solomon as the Crusaders called al-Aqsa], they rode in blood up to their bridles. Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgement of God that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers’ (Montefiore 2012:253).

It is estimated that only a small portion of the 60 000 to 70 000 of the original inhabitants of the city escaped the massacre (Hiyari 2000:138). Prior to and subsequently after this piece of the history of the Near East, and in particular Jerusalem, the people of the region have lived through many violent sieges, wars and other occupations. The area, previously known as Palestine and later on as the State of Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, have thus been in a constant battle with outside forces, all proclaiming that they are acting in the best interests of the people of the Holy Land. Religion, politics and economics have thus shaped the foreign policy of the region.

The broader Middle Eastern region held a particular attraction for Europe and the United States after the industrial revolution, and with the advent of the internal combustion engine and heavy machinery to drive the cogs of industry and the manufacture of consumer goods, machines and implements of war. Oil, endemic to the region, became a necessity; foreign governments and the foreign policy of the industrial powers lobbied hard for the Middle Eastern countries to adopt nationalistic ideals. In this way, they could be brought into the fold of democracies to take part in international trade deals. Most Western European countries, as well as Russia and the United States, vied for the benefits of the Arab nations. The first Middle Eastern oil well was drilled in 1842 by Russia in Azerbaijan (Kerr 2016:124). Consequently, the Western powers such as France, Britain, the Netherlands and the United States began speculating and drilling for oil in countries such as modern-day Iran and Iraq. The Middle East soon became one of the world’s largest oil-producing regions. This, in turn, led to a modernisation of general infrastructures such as transport, roads telecommunication, radio and newspapers (Kerr 2016:125). This led to an overall rapid economic development and opened the country to further Western influences. In addition to

economic interests, the protection of Christian minorities, especially from the Catholic denomination was also a prime reason for diplomatic and economic ties. With the application of these foreign instruments of foreign policy during the 19th and early 20th centuries, there was relative peace within the region. This picture, however, changed during and soon after World War II. Some countries such as Syria and Lebanon gained independence from the French Mandate and soon after that Israel and Transjordan became independent states. By the 1950s, no foreign power rule existed in the Middle East (Kerr 2016:126).

However, this was the start of internal conflict, tribal differences and age-old religious conflicts between Arabs and the newly founded State of Israel. The result was a strain on diplomatic relations, and the beginning of economic boycotts and military campaigns, as instruments of foreign policy from the West were applied to the region. The foreign policy applied both ways and soon became the overarching instrument of applying pressure on the Near East. International pressure soon came to bear on both the Arab and Hebrew speaking people of the region. For all parties concerned, the land once again became the battleground for economic, geopolitical and military intervention from the major superpowers of the world. The land bridge along which the ancient trade route, the Via Mara, traversed from north to south, was without any strategic minerals and had a general lack of water. It soon became an area of contradicting ideology spurred on by politics, ownership of land and religious discourse.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 Archaeology, religion and politics in the ‘Holy Land’

The practice of archaeology is paradoxical: it draws from partial, complex, and ambiguous evidence, but it is also tangible and “real” (Boozer 2015:93).

#### 3.1.1 Origin

The first known organised mission to the Holy Land was done by the Congregationalist minister Edward Robinson in 1838, accompanied by Eli Smith, a Christian missionary who could speak Arabic fluently. Their mission was simply to map as many sites as possible, as described in the Bible. In other words, the first archaeological surveys were done by theologians and not by archaeologists. Essentially, the methodology used was matching existing Arabic names of places to ancient Hebrew names; modern-day *Beitan* became *Bethel*, as described in the text (Cline 2009:13). The survey and exploration of Robinson and Smith were filled with many inaccuracies or oversight of the cultural landscape. Therefore, it did not really qualify to be called an archaeological expedition to the Holy Land (Cline 2009:14).

One can say that archaeology in its infancy started with the establishment of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) in 1865. This organisation was London-based, and its purpose was to do an investigation of the archaeology, as well as the geology and other scientific studies of the region. Its founding members were quite clear in their objectives and these were linked, among others, to the surveying of biblical history and were quite clearly driven by Christendom and theological seminaries and universities (Abu El-Haj 2001:22).

Charles Warren, who served as an officer in the British army, was tasked to survey and excavate specifically in Jerusalem where he discovered the water system still known as ‘Warren’s Shaft’ which he ascribed to David who had purportedly captured the city 3 000 years ago. However, we know that these shafts, which were used to get down to the water level, were dated to the eighth century and therefore much later than the time of David (Cline 2009:14, 15).

In addition to this and much earlier than the establishment of the PEF, a common notion among Europeans and Americans existed that the occupation and exploration of the Holy

Land, and in line with the protestant doctrine, would be a victory over the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and the Muslim faith, as well as a victory over the Ottoman influence in the Middle East (Silberman 1991:80).

This religious ideological notion was not hiding the intention by the church to claim the history of Palestine as their own. This can be best described by the speech of the Archbishop of York at the inaugural meeting of the PEF in 1865, as described in Cline (2009:15): “This country is of Palestine belongs to you and me, it is essentially ours ... We mean to walk through Palestine, in the length and breadth of it, because that land has been given to us.” Moreover, as he said by way of further explanation and justification, “if you would really understand the Bible ... you must understand also the country in which the Bible was written – a cogent summary of the religion of the motivation for the British.”

The discovery of the fragments of the Mesha Stele and its inscription at Dibon in Jordan in 1868, and the subsequent translations made possible by Charles Clermont-Ganneau and F.A. Klein, which revealed the demise of the *Kingdom of Omri and Israel*, was an important discovery. It is the first artefact that revealed a name and place mentioned in the Bible. Thus, it helped to set the tone and fervour with which the foundations of modern biblical archaeology were laid down and pursued (Cline 2009:16, 17).

In other words, the archaeology and exploration of the Near East had a far more severe impact regarding the future of the region than merely trying to find corroborative evidence of the biblical text. Silberman (1991:79) holds the following view:

The impact of this kind of historical restoration was not merely academic; through the replacement of an existing landscape with a ‘biblical’ geography, a new territorial entity was effectively defined. The boundaries of the ‘Land of the Bible’ as determined first by Robinson and later by the Palestine Exploration Fund’s Survey of Western Palestine (rather than any existing Ottoman political divisions) proved crucial in the delineation of the shape and extent of Mandatory Palestine.

As mentioned above, biblical archaeology in the classical sense has its origins in the archaeology of the United States. As Hallote (2009:246) points out, the prominence of American biblical archaeology can be traced to the American Jewish philanthropist Jacob Schiff. She writes:

If not for Schiff’s desire to integrate the study of Jewish civilization into American higher education, Americans would likely have remained followers rather than leaders in biblical archaeology. Before Schiff, Assyriologists, who created and dominated the archaeology of biblical lands in the United States, never considered Palestine an option for excavation. But because of the steadfast terms of his later donations to Harvard, and because he refused to allow Lyon’s Assyriological ideas about where to excavate

dominate, Schiff awakened American scholarship to archaeology in Palestine. He also made American Jewish philanthropists aware of the possibilities of supporting fieldwork there (and later in the State of Israel). It can therefore be said that Schiff's goals were not only met, but exceeded, as his personal efforts ultimately helped change the direction of the discipline of ancient Near Eastern studies in the United States.

This may be traced to the very fundamentalist ideology of the biblical narrative (Dever 1989:44). Since the late 19th and 20th century, an archaeological approach was formulated and maintained to address a deep-rooted belief that the biblical text should be the cornerstone of this investigation. The biblical text dictated the hypothesis. The problem statement was formulated and based upon a reactionary posit to justify theological rationality (Dever 1989:44). In his acclamation of the virtue and expertise of Yigael Yadin as an archaeologist, William Dever warns against the constitution of this group of scholars. Dever (1989:44) states that “[t]he leaders of the school were almost exclusively clerics, and the pivotal issues in the debate were not so much archaeological as historical and theological”.

A parallel but different stream of biblical archaeology developed in Israel with Yigael Yadin as one of the pioneers. According to Dever (1989:45), this pragmatic and robust driven school of thought was constituted by a focus on the establishment of a state-run department of antiquities and museums, the inauguration of academic programmes at universities, particularly at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the massive funding and design of projects such as the excavations at Hazor in the 1950s, and the large flow of publications from the excavations, which soon put Israeli biblical archaeology on the forefront of archaeology on an international scale. In addition to these, other universities such as Tel Aviv, Beersheva and Haifa competed in this playing field of excellence in archaeology.

Subsequently, by the late 1970s, Israeli archaeology had overtaken American and European archaeology to become the leading biblical archaeology school (Dever 1989:45), clearly ‘carrying the torch’ in the discipline. Mazar (2019) underlines this in a reflection of his student years and subsequent developments:

My professor Yigael Yadin was quite a brilliant man and scholar, but he was also a general and he was chief of staff of the Israeli army in 1948. For him, for example, the conquest of Canaan by Joshua was a military operation led by Joshua – he believed in it with all his heart. I do not think it was based on nationalistic grounds, but maybe on the idea that our fathers conquered the land from the Canaanites. It was finding identity, maybe identifying himself with Joshua and the conquest of Canaan. This was just after 1948. You can understand that this reflection can be understood in that context. It was in his time. We have moved on since those years and already 50 years ago none of us believed in the conquest of the country by Joshua.

This was, however, to change in the 1980s with the slow demise of biblical archaeology and the birth of ‘new archaeology’ (Dever 1989:46).

It is further corroborated by Dever (2019): “No one still thinks of any real ‘conquest’.”

We see various reasons why archaeologists would view the empirical data through lenses which do not necessarily reflect objectivity. Objectivity by its very nature is also bound by paradigms of thought and theories. This is reflective of the time of interpretation and within the space of the data collected. The physical object then becomes a piece of evidence in a sequence of events conceived by the analyst. In the geographical region of Israel and Palestine, we have seen this phenomenon manifesting itself in the various schools of thought.

The common academic view is that, before the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, we saw the school of biblical archaeologists using the discipline to corroborate biblical text and place the chronology of the text within the stratigraphy of the physical space and landscape of Palestine. The time and space of the physical object then became paramount for the archaeologist and for Zionist scholars, including both the Hebrew and Christian religious fraternity. In both these cases, we see that there is a specific ideology that needs to be underpinned by physical objectivity.

To this end, Silberman (1991:79) highlights the following:

Modern biblical archaeology and geography thus effectively assisted political developments in the land of the Bible by providing a concrete means of reshaping its history, and specific territorial foci on which to exercise national claims. The shift from passive pilgrimage to active "improvement" was to have far-reaching implications for the future. By re-making Palestine's geography and history in the image of their own biblical understandings, the explorers and scholars of the great powers of the West were instrumental in the ideological validation of a political and economic transformation hardly less far-reaching than that so successfully accomplished in the colonial Bethlehems, Nazareths, Hebrons, New Canaans and New Jerusalems of America.

The notion of ‘time and space’ in archaeological interpretation then becomes of paramount importance. Initially, biblical archaeologists interpreted the evidence, based upon the biblical narrative and textual relationship with that of the physical archaeological evidence, as they understood it at the time. Processual archaeology, in turn, interprets the evidence, based upon scientific empiricism and behaviourism. Cognitive and post-processual archaeology interprets the evidence on an anthropological and a multidimensional cultural view. Just as pure science, archaeology has also moved through a series of paradigm shifts. Whitley (1998:24) holds the following opinion: “One final point can be made about the

development and meaning of cognitive and post-processual archaeologies. This involves an analogy with physics and pertains to the shift from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics. One result of this fundamental change in our understanding of the nature of the universe has involved our sense of time and space.”

As a precursor to the arguments that follow and to put a stake in the ground, I emphasise the notion of ‘our’ sense of time and space and its importance for scholars of archaeology. At the risk of putting archaeology at the mercy of ‘relativism’ which by all accounts can derail a fair interpretation and negate the existence of truth of a simple exercise of observation and conclusion on the part of the archaeologist, I would like to argue that the biblical archaeological and processual interpretation of the Iron Age was thus not a strictly positivist view and remain in the postmodernist view and paradigm of relativism. The writing of the biblical text by all accounts was a relativistic observation and exercise by the original authors. The finding of chronologically significant artefacts, regardless of the density in some cases by the present-day archaeologist which correlates with the text, must then be treated fairly and with the same amount of relativistic aplomb as post-processual scholars would defend their archaeological interpretation regarding history.

In defence of post-processual archaeology, Whitley (1998:24) reveals the following:

[K]nowledge is much less absolute and certain, and that the world is more complex than positivism would have us believe. But they also promise, to varying degrees, that the accommodation of this relativity, and a recognition of the world’s complexity, will aid our understanding of the past in fundamental ways. And this can only be seen, by all archaeologists, as a good goal.

In my view, the ‘minimalist’ attack on Israeli archaeology as having an ideological and nationalistic motivation, based upon interpretation of the artefact of the site, is therefore unfair and out of context as it is much too simplistic and does not take into account cultural relativism. In defence of the minimalist view, Davies (2015: xiii) argues:

[The] Biblical Archaeology hypothesis is inadequate. Biblical archaeology was, and still is, representative of a mindset. We must rather speak of a ‘paradigm shift’, the concept created in Thomas Kuhn’s 1962 work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn actually contrasted science with humanities in this respect, accepting that, in the latter, various hypotheses could exist simultaneously. But his analysis can be applied well enough to the case in point because it involves the scientific (some would say social-scientific) discipline of archaeology.

To this end, Whitlam (2018:168) argues as follows:

Any attempt to come to terms with the biblical tradition needs to give priority to their literary nature and intent. In effect the question which needs to be asked is how are we to read the texts. To argue on the basis of recent archaeological evidence that Israel’s origins

were within Palestine is not to say that the Bible is wrong as so often is claimed, but rather to challenge the dominant ways of reading these texts as historical records of early Israelite history.

Karl Popper uses the postulated theory of the sociology of knowledge to explain how we view the world. Popper (2011:420) points out that “[t]he sociology of knowledge argues that scientific thought, and especially thought on social and political matters, does not proceed in a vacuum, but in a socially conditioned atmosphere” and that “the social habitat of the thinker determines a whole system of opinions and theories which appear to him as unquestionably true or self-evident”. According to Popper (2011:420), this “system of assumptions is called by sociologists of knowledge a *total ideology*”. Popper reveals the self-contradictory idea of Kant’s notion which rejects a ‘passivist’ theory of knowledge, in other words, *empiricism*.

The opposite notion of Kant’s view is that of Hegel, namely “that man’s intellectual outfit was constantly changing, and that it was part of his social heritage; accordingly, the development of man’s reason must coincide with the historical development of his society, i.e., of the nation to which he belongs” (Popper 2011:421). In short, Popper (2011:429) argues that “there is no possible short-cut to rid us of our ideologies”.

Can we then, in this regard, clear our minds from this empiricism that science demands and for which processual archaeology strives? At the same time, we may also ask whether the influence of preconceived assumptions by the minimalists to argue against the idea of an Israeli archaeological school of thought or, for that matter, biblical archaeology, does not fall victim to political ideology or Israeli nationalistic ideology.

I am perhaps at this stage not completely convinced that archaeology has moved through such radical paradigm shifts as a pure science has with the shifts from Newtonian to Einsteinian and ultimately quantum mechanics.

In this regard, Shanks (2012:10) argues that “[t]he nationalist may offer archaeological evidence for unbroken material continuity of heritage from the past in order to substantiate contemporary claims to territory and cultural identity” and expresses the notion that “there are equal opportunities for progressive political and cultural critique, for challenging orthodox or hegemonic historical narratives by grounding history in the remains of the past, the unedited evidence for past lives, rather than texts written by vested interest”.



In such a case one would be tempted to argue that objectivity ceases to exist and to a large extent becomes a subjective interpretation and therefore part of the post-processual narrative and logic. Such an outcome would then *conveniently* become an easy target for the critics of both Zionism and religion.

Before 1948, the people of Palestine to a large extent lived at the mercy of foreign government policies and ideologies that were predetermined for them. One can ask what the role of academia is on most social issues and how do archaeologists act under such circumstances? We know that historically in colonial times, archaeology used to work closely with the authorities of the occupiers. This was the case in Iraq in 2003 during the US military campaigns and subsequent rescue archaeology operations. Hamilakis (2009:6) argues:

Archaeology is all about context, we say to our first-year students. Yet our colleagues, with some exceptions, seemed to have (or have chosen to) ignored this context. There was perhaps a desire to demonstrate complete neutrality: perhaps many believed that heritage specialists can be professionals, completely apolitical, or they thought that in this way their intervention can be more effective. Also, many archaeologists and other heritage professionals may have thought that they can decouple the policies of their governments from their own attempts to rescue antiquities, or even that they may be able to atone for some policies by attempting to preserve some of the antiquities of the invading country. Yet all social action situated within specific regimes of power.

During the early part of the 1990s, a group of scholars known as the ‘nihilists’ or minimalists emerged. Their main point of contention was that the biblical text did not contain any significant actual history, which was in any case hardly corroborated by the archaeological record of Israel (Cline 2009:59).

Consequently, any claim that was made to establish historical roots based on the Bible was nonsense and therefore spurious reasoning by biblical archaeologists. They were also vehemently opposed to the establishment of the State of Israel at the cost of Palestinian history, as well as any claim that they had to any previously occupied territories. This campaign was so concentrated that the group of scholars became known as the Copenhagen School.

We have seen many such critiques, such as the Copenhagen School, which outrightly rejects the methodology of biblical archaeology. To a lesser degree, scholars such as Finkelstein and Silberman (2002:5) would argue that the ‘time’ (chronology) of biblical archaeology in the Iron Age is misplaced, regardless of the many places discovered and mentioned in biblical texts, as well as the significant role that archaeology has contributed. Finkelstein

and Silberman (2002:5) hold the opinion that “it is not to say that archaeology has proved the biblical narrative to be true in all of its details. Far from it: it is now evident that many events of biblical history did not take place in either a particular era or the manner described. Some of the most famous events in the Bible clearly never happened at all.”

On the issue of religion, politics and more particularly the biblical text and the non-history of the Israelites, Faust (2006:236) argues that, according to the Copenhagen School, the existence of earlier groups of people only mentioned in the biblical text is not questioned; however, it is a politically motivated counter ideology that makes up most of their argument. Faust (2006:236) argues the following point:

We would, therefore, have expected critical scholars, as the so-called minimalists present themselves, to discredit the existence of those groups, since they are mentioned only in the Bible. They are expected, however, to take the existence of Israel for granted. After all, in the case of Israel we have an external source, Merenptah’s stela, which proves that Israel, of all the groups, did exist. It is an irony that those who use the mention of other peoples in the biblical texts as reasons to doubt the identification of the Israelites in the archaeological record are the very same scholars who discredit the entire biblical corpus as a source for the history not only of the Iron I, but also of the Iron II. Scholars such as Ahlstrom, Thompson, and Lemche would be better off questioning the written traditions on peoples such as the Hivites, and sticking to the assumption that, since reliable contemporary sources reveal only the existence of the Israelites, we should treat them only as the Iron I highland population. And it is even more ironic that leading this trend are scholars that, due to their outright rejection of the Bible as a historical source for Iron Age Israel, were even labelled “nihilists”. They implicitly used the texts, against whose validity they preach, in order to “deprive” the Israelites of their identity, despite the fact that their existence is supported by external text(s) (just the proof they usually claim to be searching for). This is not, of course, because the minimalists (most of them at least) have something against the Israelites. What they begrudge is modern Israel. Their political prejudice leads them to distort both history and method.

This adds to the debate between the various schools of thought and those who favour the theoretical approach, which would include both religious scholars, as well as politicians and political extremists, and ultimately the public at large. As an example, Yadin (1957:169-170) on excavations at Hazor, concludes as such: “In summing up we may say that the excavations so far not only confirmed the Biblical data concerning the conquest of Canaan by tribes of Israel, the activities of the kings of Israel in the north ...” and “... rightly deserves the description given in the BOOK OF JOSHUA: *For Hazor before time was head of all those Kingdoms.*”

This claim by Yadin is not necessarily erroneous. It is merely an observation based upon empirical data gathered at the site and the use of the text provided by the Hebrew Bible. It then becomes an issue of interpretation and the subsequent publication of the author’s findings, much to the chagrin of its critics at the time. The abovementioned comments of

conquest by Yadin are challenged by a contemporary scholar. Aharoni (1957:142) argues that the conquest of Galilee is not as easily explained by the archaeological evidence collected in 1955, with specific reference to the sites of Hazor, Megiddo and Beth Shean. Aharoni (1957:142) holds the following:

In the plain of Jezreel there was a chain of important fortified Canaanite towns, such as Megiddo, Taanach and Beth –Shan. If the Children of Israel marched upon the Canaanite towns from the south, why did not the king of Hazor choose the plain of Jezreel for the battle, in view of its greater convenience for war-chariots and its strong fortifications, as the king had done before against Thutmosis III? And how did the Israelites pass this fortified chain without meeting with Canaanite resistance?

This may be an oversimplification, but one based upon a lack of clear archaeological evidence and a subjective observation made by the author. Yadin chooses to see the early Israelites as the conquerors, while Aharoni is taking a more conservative view. Yet, they base their observations on the conquest from the archaeological evidence.

The dispute between theology and biblical archaeology about the authenticity of some biblical events and places was therefore in existence before the advent of ‘new archaeology’ in the 1960s which indicates the revolutionary and paradigmatic shift of Israeli scholarship in the field of archaeology. Aharoni (1957:131) observes:

Indeed, a number of Palestinian excavations have been made primarily in order to elucidate problems of the conquest by the Children of Israel: such as, for instance, the excavations at Jericho, Ai, Bethel and other sites. Some of these excavations did not help to solve the problems posed by the Bible: on the contrary, they merely complicated matters still further and raised new questions to be answered. Sometimes the actual archaeological interpretation of the findings is disputed. But withal, it is nevertheless obvious that no theory which ignores archaeological findings can hope to be accepted, and every new discovery brings us nearer to a solution.

Could it be asked whether Iron Age excavations in Israel and Palestine after the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 were conveniently interpreted through a historical bias and that these interpretations enjoyed more intense interest than what other earlier or later stratigraphic layers did? To what extent did this bias influence interpretation?

At two sites, namely Hazor and Megiddo, Yadin excavated with the full support of the state, both financially and with political/religious sanction. Cline (2009:43) reports that “Yadin taught an entire generation of future archaeologists and initiated or restarted excavations at many sites, including Megiddo. He was not only interested in establishing an Israeli national identity regarding ancient evidence for a Jewish presence in the land, but-like his American counterpart Albright-thought that archaeology could help prove the accuracy and

authenticity of the Bible.” This inadvertently gave credence to the historical narrative of Israel and set the tone for future biblical archaeology hypothesis and excavation.

Later excavations, especially in the Jezreel Valley and northern hill country, revealed that such a simplified view about Israelite history and settlement is problematic. In *The forgotten kingdom* (Finkelstein 2013:10) the following point is made:

Needless to say, understanding the settlement history of the highlands in terms of cyclic history stands in contrast to a major concept of the biblical authors (followed by many modern scholars), namely, that ancient Israel was a unique phenomenon and that Israelite history was linear in nature, from conquest to settlement, to a period of charismatic leadership (judges), to kingship and the rise of territorial kingdoms.

### 3.1.2 Religion

I have mentioned before that the complexities of everyday life and religion have had a major influence on the methodology and the interviews that followed. An example of this is the similarities shared between the Jewish and the Arab population, especially in Jerusalem. Bernard Lewis, an eminent scholar of Middle Eastern history, observes the following:

The Judeo-Islamic tradition differs from the Judeo-Christian tradition in several important respects. The Muslims, of course, retain neither the Old nor the New Testament, regarding, both as superseded by their own final revelation, the Koran. But the Muslims have much in common with the Jews that Christians either neglected or rejected. Notably among these is the idea of a holy law regulating every aspect of public and personal life (Lewis & Churchill 2013:240-241).

Nowhere else in the world is religion, sacred space, and occupation of land such an issue as in modern-day Israel, as well as during the past in Palestine before 1948. Before 1948 the sacred spaces were frequently visited by Jewish pilgrims, but rather in the sense of religious pilgrimages to the Holy Land. After 1948 there was a deliberate expansion of sacred spaces by the ministry of religious affairs, which did at the time provoke the ire of many scholars and officials (Bar 2008:4). Bar (2008:5) raises the point that after 1948, we see an amalgamation of nation-building or statehood with that of religion and sacred places and the establishment of Jewishness culture on the Israeli landscape. He also states the following:

One of the more interesting aspects of the cultural history of the Jewish national revival in the Land of Israel has been the incorporation of the sacred in a secular-national framework. Traditionally, Jewish sacred space included largely alleged graves of biblical figures and Talmudic saints, but as the Zionist enterprise progressed and upon the founding of the State of Israel, a new type of sacred space emerged, emphasizing mostly Jewish heroism together with Zionist martyrdom. Following the 1948 War, Zionist sacred topography was extended to include dozens of war memorials and military cemeteries designed to substantiate and celebrate the heroic sacrifice of the fallen soldiers and the achievement of the State's independence. The cult of the fallen soldiers was based on

both the ethos of patriotic sacrifice exalted in all modern nation-states and on the unique Jewish legacy of sacrifice, martyrdom, and national heroism. During this period, then, when the State of Israel nurtured mainly the “cult of nationhood”, stressing national elements connected to both the distant and more recent history of the Land of Israel (Bar 2008:4).

Religion is the foundation stone of the region. You are surrounded by it, and it is part of your daily life and influence from a young age, as Solimani (2019) points out: “What is interesting is that from the age of six years we study the Bible in our first year in school. In both religious or secular schools, it is part of the curriculum to study the Bible. The Bible is part of your identity in Israel.” When he became an archaeologist, he met with secular people – totally secular – and said that there is a big problem with the Bible because of the lack of archaeological finds, it was perceived by them as an attempt at destroying one of the main identities of the new Israel. It is very difficult for some people to accept this. He emphasises the following fact:

[R]eligion as a whole is growing in Israel. Even in secular Israeli society, the Bible is part of the new Israeli identity. If you say the Bible is not correct, they feel like you hurt their identity and that you are against this *identity*. They do not listen to the criticism of the Bible and the archaeological findings. They interpret it as a political stance or act on your part.

The discipline of biblical archaeology and its intersection with religion has been debated thoroughly by scholars over the decades and, as we have seen, the archaeological evidence did not always support the biblical text. Regardless, we saw a continuation of theology-based excavations involved in excavating sites that have previously proved to be lacking direct evidence of the biblical narrative; however, the search continues and it appears as if there is a rift between biblical scholars and archaeologists today. Historically we see that biblical scholars continued to refer to the events that, according to dirt archaeology, did not occur. However, they chose to refer to these events as symbolic, but I would surmise that the mainstream churches as well as evangelicals still proclaim the events as the truth or as a proclamation, which is generally accepted by the population as real. Zevit (2002:8) explains:

This testimony became grist for the mills of the liberal, positivistic “Biblical Theology” movement that achieved great popularity starting in the 1950s and has had a profound influence on what has been taught subsequently in both Christian and non-Orthodox, Jewish settings since then. What distinguished this movement from more conservative approaches was its ability to discern a difference between the reliability and accuracy of the Bible’s historical descriptions as tested by archaeological investigations and the theological predications of the text. Predications were raised to prominence as “proclamation” while events tested and not found wanting were esteemed as witnesses to the proclamation. Events found wanting, such as the enslavement of Israelites in Egypt, were classified as “myth”, their lack of historicity ignored, and they were milked for their kerygmatic predications alone.

This tradition of archaeology is continuing in Israel today, even though it would not be readily admitted by seminaries or Christian-based universities, especially from the United States and organisation such as Elad in Israel. It would, of course, exclude the ultra-orthodox Jewish community.

The role of the Islamic tradition in being a Muslim and living in Israel also needs to be looked at in terms of the archaeological research of the region. The influence of modern society and foreign policy has had a profound effect on the Islamic tradition. Firstly, we see a decay from within happening under the onslaught of modernity. This observation was made by Badaeu (1959:61) more than 70 years ago at the emergence of the ‘new archaeology’ and during a period of great turmoil in the Middle East. Indeed, the Islamic tradition has had to deal with radical changes that are often taken for granted. Badaeu (1959:61) explains:

The same forces of modernity that have reshaped our Western world are invading Muslim lands and society. But the rate of invasion is vastly accelerated; changes with which the West made its peace through four centuries of adjustment have been compressed in the East into a scant century and a half. The result has been an explosive dislocation of the old ways that augurs a “parting” from traditional Islam far more radical than anything that has gone on in the past. There is both pathos and penetration in the words of a young Muslim scholar who wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century, “The days have cast us, together with our religion and our honour, into a field with ravenous lions.”

The result of these changes brought about a new ideal, vastly separate from the religious tradition, and we see an emergence of the ideology of secular nationalism developing among the Arab nations. Badaeu (1959:66, 68) contends that Islam did lose ground to and became “subservient to nationalism”. However, he notes that, regardless of the state institutions that came into being, there remained an element of the old Islamic tradition. We now know that this tradition has seen rapid growth in the broader Middle Eastern region as well as in Israel specifically. It is not strange to hear that Palestinians have no interest in their history (Abu El-Haj 2001:255). However, Abu El-Haj (2001) explains that this is not the case and of course also not true to presuppose that the alleged lack of interest among Palestinians in Arab history of both the West Bank and Israel is intrinsic. The difference between some proponents of Jewish history would argue that “what one needed to be connected with is one’s past and one’s historical roots. Those historical roots were embodied, most reliably, in material-cultural objects, which, in contrast to historical records, are incontestable proof of the past.” In other words, “[t]o ‘have’ a culture ... is to be a collector”. And to be a nation, it seems, one has to collect one’s material culture. She had often asked herself, “Why don’t Palestinians have a historical memory? People who want to be a people have to have a

historical memory.” I suggested that if there was such a lack of interest in archaeology, it might not signify a disregard for their history but instead a lack of excitement about archaeology. There are, after all, other ways of relating to one’s past and other ways of constructing or practising nationhood; moreover, the need for roots, that which she had identified as the source of Jewish interest in archaeology, were not problematic for Palestinians (Abu El-Haj 2001:256).

In line with the above, I remember reading a comment once made by a Palestinian in the occupied territory saying that they did not have to dig for their history. As he indicated around, he pointed to his village and said that it is all around them.

Abu El-Haj (2001:257) explains what Palestinian statehood and history entail and what the role of archaeology is in this; she notes that “the Palestinian population as an authentic or mature – a modern – nation can be recognized within the colonial grammar of Israeli national ideology”. For this to come to fruition the nation has to back up their claim as a modern nation-state, it is expected that the history writers of that post-colonial nation can rely only on archaeology to substantiate the claims of historical roots and nation-building. She holds the view that there is a similarity between Israel and Palestine. A case in point, as illustrated by Abu El-Haj (2001:258), is the ultra-orthodox rejection of the Israeli state, as well as the rejection of archaeological excavation, to prove historicity and especially where these excavations would disturb cemeteries. She writes:

... the way in which Ultra-Orthodox opposition to archaeological excavations, specifically, to the excavation of Jewish cemeteries and graves, is understood to violate boundaries. It violates the boundaries of a secular-labour Zionist culture (which the kibbutz epitomizes) and the boundaries of national loyalty, writ large (through the solicitation of information from Arab laborers), and, of course, it violates the resonance between the two. Since the early 1980s, Israeli newspapers have been replete with images and stories of violent confrontations between Ultra-Orthodox demonstrators, archaeologists, and the police. It is a struggle to limit the rights of archaeologists in excavating Jewish grave sites, which, according to a strict Ultra-Orthodox interpretation of Jewish religious law, should not be disturbed. More broadly, this conflict is but one axis of a wider national-cultural and political battle over the character of modern Jewish identity and of the Israeli state.

The conclusion that I draw from this is that the road to nationhood, and this includes all nationhood and identity struggles, does not necessarily have to rely on archaeology alone. Archaeology should consider the historicity of all who occupy a region. The oft repeated remark made that the Palestinians have no history then becomes redundant at best.

Similarly, the following is noted by Scham (2001:205):

[T]he mere concept of an American School of Classical Studies volume focusing on Greek postmodern archaeological theory or an American Schools of Oriental Research publication of Israeli and Palestinian papers on their differing views as to the presentation of archaeological sites in Jerusalem (unlikely though such volumes might be at the present time) should be enough to engender enthusiasm for this project. Interesting provocation aside, however, another significant advantage is that the inclusion of other views in archaeology not only enhances our own understanding of the past but will also eventually help us to move from opposition to collaboration.

And very importantly:

[L]est we forget those projects we have already witnessed that reflect the distrust with which disenfranchised people have come to view scholars who interpret their past. Similarly, those of us who work outside of our own countries have found ourselves increasingly shut out because of the past failings of our colleagues to account for local sensitivities. Ultimately, in arguing for the inclusion of other views, we are also laying the groundwork for the inclusion of our own (Scham 2001:205).

The question that is often raised is whether a multi-cultural history of Israel can be written which would include all the inhabitants of the region. According to Thompson (2019:89), it is possible and has been done, entailing a “critical revision of Josephus” history of Jewish origins, so that there is now a better understanding of the first five books of the Bible as well as a better understanding of the Samaritan and Jewish conflict. In addition, Thompson (2019:89) contends that the work they have done will be able to demonstrate the existence of a “non-Jewish Israel”, reaching as far back as the first reference of the Merneptah Stele and possibly as far back as Shechem during the Bronze Age (Thompson 2019:89).

Finally, Thompson (2019:89) concludes:

A non-Jewish history is not merely possible. It also avoids the dominant ethnocentrism of biblically orientated histories of Israel, which have been so central to American and Israeli biblical archaeology. Such a non-Jewish Israel hardly embrace the whole of Palestine’s history, but is a sub-regional history where the limitations of ethnic identities have a limited role to play within the ever-changing context of Palestine’s multi-cultural landscape.

Significant to this suggestion by Thompson (2019:90), is the “acknowledgement of the excellent work in post-processual theory and interpretations on sites excavated by Oded Lipschits and the team at Tel Aviv University and specifically for work done in the southern highlands”.

The development of Judaism and the historical narrative as in the biblical text may reveal the current situation. Assmann (2011:175) argues as follows: “In Israel, however, religion was created in a completely new and radical way that made it independent of the general cultural change, subjugation, and assimilation. Religion became a kind of ‘iron wall’ that Israelites used to separate themselves from the surrounding ‘alien’ culture.” He continues:



“... as an autonomous unity, it then became the basis and the medium for resistance against the cultural and political structures of a hostile outside world.”

In addition, from a historical and archaeological point of view, the Iron Age I and II periods, as far as the Israelite presence is concerned, are further expounded upon by Faust (2006), contending that that the main enemies and possibly the catalyst of Israelite ethnicity to radically transform itself was the Philistines, the most complex society in the region (Faust 2006:146). He further argues that the Philistines were indeed a force by which the Israelites “defined themselves” and states: “The process by which they ceased to produce bichrome pottery (and probably started to circumcise, among other customs) should be therefore viewed as acculturation, rather than assimilation” (Faust 2006:146).

To this end then, we cannot in the words of Fantalkin (2019) “throw the baby out with the bath water”, as the Copenhagen School are prone to arguing that there are no significant ethnic markers that define the Israelites from the rest of the historical and modern-day population groups of the region. Therefore, archaeologically and biblically, it is not in my opinion strange that the biblical text serves as a reference to the Israelite adventure in the Holy Land and that it has become part of the daily lives of the people of modern-day Israel or, for that matter, the Arab citizens who follow their own traditions and ethnicity linked to the land.

According to Herzog (2019), the archaeological interpretations regarding the biblical text and the archaeological evidence and subsequent publications have all had some impact on the narrative and how the Bible is taught at school. “Our children study the Old Testament from the 2nd grade, and throughout their education. And all our national holidays are connected to the so-called Exodus. Thus, our culture is obviously related and connected to the biblical story.” In this respect, the article of Herzog and Finkelstein’s book later made quite a change in the public reception of this. Bible teachers say that Herzog cannot teach the Bible classes the same as he did before. They heard about these new opinions and views. So, according to Herzog (2019),

... there is obviously a connection between archaeology and the concept of the Bible. There is quite an important change and progress in public opinion. People are now more open to knowing that there are problems and criticism and that not everything is as it was written in the Bible. It is not just a history, there is a connection between different legends and facts, and it is a mixture.

He concludes though that for some people the story is now broken and that this is difficult to accept.

I will discuss my views on the interaction between religion, politics, and history at a later stage. On the intersection of religion, politics and archaeology, Mazar (2019) observes as follows: “Very few archaeologists are really involved in right-wing or left-wing ideologies. Most of the archaeologists ... is not interested – or in their personal lives they are interested, but their work is not influenced by any ideology.” But he believes there is a lot of utilisation and exploitation of archaeology for this purpose:

What I am doing is archaeology as a scholarship, as a science, as a message field. This is what interests me. There are times when it comes to certain periods, regarding Israelite occupation and what is our conquest of Canaan or the United Monarchy of David and Solomon. There is some collision of views, and of course, when we try to interpret our finds in terms of the history of Israel, we must refer to the biblical narrative, we have to think what the opposite is concerning this narrative.

Questions like the following can be asked: “Is it historical, is it not historical, is it ideological?” Mazar believes that “this collision between politics, ideology and archaeology exists everywhere. Here it may be more emphasized because we are living in an area of great conflict, but I think you can live in China, the USA and the UK and you will find it.”

When I asked about the public perception of this and whether the public actually care about this, most of the respondents believed that this trend could be on the increase, but it is more a case of tradition, rather than a politically driven ideology. Here is where the lines between tradition and the creation of a new state, as well as the religious historical narrative, get blurred. After 1948 any reference to the previous colonialism of Palestine disappeared from the historical narrative for Israel and I argue that it was replaced by a historical and religious discourse. Bar (2008:4) writes:

One of the more interesting aspects of the cultural history of the Jewish national revival in the Land of Israel has been the incorporation of the sacred in a secular-national framework. Traditionally, Jewish sacred space included largely alleged graves of biblical figures and Talmudic saints, but as the Zionist enterprise progressed and upon the founding of the State of Israel, a new type of sacred space emerged, emphasizing mostly Jewish heroism together with Zionist martyrdom. Following the 1948 War, Zionist sacred topography was extended to include dozens of war memorials and military cemeteries designed to substantiate and celebrate the heroic sacrifice of the fallen soldiers and the achievement of the State's independence. The cult of the fallen soldiers was based on both the ethos of patriotic sacrifice exalted in all modern nation-states and on the unique Jewish legacy of sacrifice, martyrdom, and national heroism. During this period, then, when the State of Israel nurtured mainly the “cult of nationhood”, stressing national elements connected to both the distant and more recent history of the Land of Israel (Bar 2008:4).

The religious tradition to a large extent still permeates the physical space of the macro-environment inward towards the micro-environment, as espoused by its assertion that the geographical location of the holy places binds the community to its close vicinity. Indeed, as described by the Mishna, the movement inward towards the Holy of Holies increases in intensity and the human experience manifests in awe and a sense of absolute sacredness.

The Bible is inextricably linked to the land, its history and its people today. Mizrahi (2019), who is one of the younger generation archaeologists, holds this view:

I think that there is currently just one level of stories in the Bible that is relevant, and that is the history it speaks about. The Bible is a book that tells us about people who lived here three thousand years ago, and their other ancestors included. It does not matter if it is true or not. It is very strong.

He explains it by an example of “the reaction of Benjamin Netanyahu. Archaeologists found a seal mentioned in Yahu, and he said it is from his family, although his name has changed. So, there are always Israelis who are saying that we have been here for three thousand years.”

He further elaborates: “So, the Bible is a powerful book here in Israel, because we studied it for years. Even if people don’t evolve here, they see the land in the eyes of the Bible, for the Bible is still very powerful.” He cannot pinpoint whether it is because of ...

King David, but it is like you see an olive tree outside, and you think about the biblical land, the Bible is something that is still very important. The Bible is an identity – a very deep identity. For example, it is like the English and the Royal Family. It is not just a tourist thing; it is part of the land. This is how the Bible is here.

As Haberman (2003:167) comments on the Mishna: “the paradigmatic case of sacred space is the land of Israel. Ten concentric circles describe ever-increasing intensities of *kedushah*, holiness (Kelim 1:6). The land of Israel delimits the outer boundary of this spatial system of sanctity, which culminates in the most enclosed private sanctuary within the Temple: The Holy of Holies.” He also confirms that “[t]his rabbinic map describes ritualised motion inward into smaller, more contained, defined, exclusive space, in a purification process emphasising meticulous preparation; attentiveness to human fitness to approach the sacred realm; and the actions required to contribute to the healthy function of the sacred system.”

This sacredness that was given to the holy places in the city of Jerusalem thus becomes non-negotiable and it is built into the collective consciousness of the inhabitants of these spaces. The religious ideology becomes a subconscious institutionalised phenomenon, espoused by the population, although none of the scriptures or textual maps emphasise a specific

geographical area or that these inhabitants are followers of a particular religious doctrine.

On this note, Haberman (2003:167) states the following:

On the surface, this Mishnaic topographical structure of the holiness of Israel appears to map sacredness onto physical space, earthly territory. However, the currency of text is a sacredness in relation to distinctly human processes of community life: growing food, giving birth, menstruating, enduring illness, honouring the dead, seeking spiritual closeness. The text does not emphasise territorial possession or ownership claims to the sacred enclosure.

Accordingly, the interpretations of text and scriptures regarding the placement of holy spaces may be inadvertently misconstrued and the fervour and veracity of the defence of its loci overemphasised. The ever-changing historical and political climate of the region and the city of Jerusalem has thus illuminated the holy places as spaces of contention and therefore had a direct effect on the archaeology of these spaces. For the Jewish inhabitants of the Old City and the Jewish Quarter, the Western Wall and the possibility of the discovery of the Palace of David is of paramount importance. Fox (2002:49) notes that “Jerusalem, the Holy Land’s focal point, the physical city came to be totally overshadowed by an idealized version that bore little resemblance to the original; the sacred geography became stylized and symbolic, existing in a realm of spiritual meaning.” The total area of physical and historical landscape (according to the biblical texts) was initially seen as significant in the telling of the history of the Holy Land. In addition to this, Lamie (2007:115) holds the view that “[i]mportant ancient pagan sites in the Holy Land were seamlessly incorporated into Christian legend”.

On viewing the Western Wall, Abraham Joshua Heschel, a Polish American and leading Jewish theologian and scholar, voiced his exultation as follows:

At first, I fainted. Then I saw: a wall of frozen tears, a cloud of sighs The Wall. The old mother crying for all of us. Stubborn, loving, waiting for redemption. ... The Wall. No comeliness to be acclaimed, no beauty to be relished. But a heart and an ear. Its very being is compassion. You stand still and hear, stones of sorrow, acquaintance with grief. We all hide our faces from agony, shun the afflicted. The Wall is compassion, its face is open only to those smitten with grief. ... Silence. I embrace the stones. I pray: “O Rock of Israel, make our faith strong and your words luminous in our hearts and minds. No image. Pour holiness into our moments.” Once you have lived a moment at the Wall, you never go away (Haberman 2003:171).

This exultation, coming from a man who grew up in Europe and the United States, is evident how inextricably linked the faith and physical spaces are within the landscape of the city and the region. He held the view that the State of Israel and its temporal meaning is more than just a location. “Its sheer being is the message ... Israel is a personal challenge, a

personal religious issue. It is a call to every one of us as an individual, a call which one cannot answer vicariously” (Haberman 2003:174).

We have also seen a transfer of sacred spaces from one faith to another. Coupled with the geopolitical occupation of the physical land, such a double blow for the Muslim or Arab population would lead to conflict, which would make reconciliation or a peaceful solution near impossible, as Bar (2008:7) states:

Another category of Jewish sacred places developed after 1948 and far more abundant in the Israeli landscape was sacred sites that were held by Muslims prior to the War. Although even before the division of the region Jews regularly frequented many of these sacred sites (for example King David’s Tomb in Jerusalem and the Cave of Elijah in Haifa), ownership of these places remained in Muslim hands and many of the sacred sites were in fact run by the Islamic charitable foundation [Waqf]. Jews were usually allowed to visit these places only during certain days and only after paying entrance fees. The political, military, and, most importantly, demographic changes that took place after 1948 led to the extraction of different areas in the Land of Israel from their original Arab population, and to the transfer of the sacred sites in those areas to Israeli sovereignty. Although this activity was not guided by official policy, these sacred sites can be seen as but another means of achieving sovereignty over these sites and territories, parallel to other endeavours that were made during the same period to establish Israeli settlements in these territories.

The sacred space of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is for the Muslim community the same. Any archaeological excavation under or near these sacred spaces is tantamount to blasphemy and science has no place here. The combination of the lived-in space and the religious space is nowhere more pronounced than in Jerusalem. Both Judaism and Islam require such prerequisites to practise its daily rituals and this is inextricably linked to the historical foundation stones in both the physical and metaphysical realms. Similarly, modern-day evangelicals may argue that the search for the Higgs boson ‘God particle’ is entering their sacred space even though it does not have any physical location. It is in the realm of sacredness. Human and personal agency in lived-in spaces becomes an important constraint or enabler in the pursuit of science and knowledge and therefore it would be easy for Western critical theorisation to fixate on the perceived negative archaeological practice within the political and the social environment in Jerusalem.

Similarly, the Christian tradition played its role in establishing the sacred spaces, but it brought with it an economic and political-strategic element. The competition between the various imperialist superpowers was evident during the late 18th and early 19th century and after the Ottoman period had come to an end. Two examples of these ventures are Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as ‘Lawrence of Arabia’, and Henry Austen Layard, who had dual roles, both as archaeologists and diplomats. Some allegations of being

spies were also made against them. The prime focus of these individuals was to survey the Levant for archaeological treasures, as well as for strategic geopolitical manoeuvring and to extend the influence of their sponsors. In addition to this, the Balfour Declaration was also part of Britain's imperialist plan to extend and ensure its influence in Palestine and the Middle East. Theodore Herzl implored Alfred Milner, Nathan Rothschild and Cecil John Rhodes to use their influence in the establishment of a Zionist state and the outcome was the granting of Palestine for the establishment of this state (Brown 2016:50-51). One of Rhodes's partners in expansion was the British engineer and archaeologist, Charles Warren, who was commissioned by the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) to excavate in the Holy Land and in particular in Jerusalem. With an interplay between political power and religious fanaticism of someone like Cecil John Rhodes, and the power and money at his disposal, we see that political ideology and religion can become an awesome and powerful political weapon. In Rhodes's paper "Confessions of faith", he puts forward the ideas that it is the will of God that the inferior people of foreign lands be subjected to the rule of the British empire. This also included Palestine. As further pointed out by Brown (2016:51), as far back as 1877 Rhodes had already envisaged the following: "By recording his aims and ambitions in the *Confessions of Faith*, Rhodes sets in motion a sequence of events which – by the time Milner and Rothschild intervene – changed the course of history, particularly in the Middle East."

I believe that these similarities play an important role in the geopolitical perception of the Holy Land as far as both these groups are concerned and perhaps the Christian tradition and scholars of archaeology of the Near East have overlooked this important factor. The role of non-Jewish or Muslim archaeologists, ergo Western archaeologists, during the early days of biblical archaeology in the Near East may have solely focused on the roots of the Christian tradition and faith in the excavation of biblical sites, especially the conquest of Canaan by Joshua during the Iron Age. Perhaps then there is merit in saying that biblical archaeology conducted by Israelis did not completely set out to justify Zionist colonisation, but rather as Amihai Mazar (2019) puts it, "to look for an identity" and not necessarily for "nationalistic purposes, but a personal desire to study the past". Mazar, however, contends that the archaeology of Israel has since moved on. Thus, the excavations of archaeologists such as Yigael Yadin at Megiddo and Hazor were significant at the time and place, and relevant from a historical point of view. This *raison d'être* should always be upheld because academic prudence requires it. The time and space within which archaeology takes place,

reveal cold facts, but the interpretation reveals more than just that, such as the interpretation of the Merneptah Stele and the Samaria Ostraca. According to Ingrid Hjelm and Philip Davies of the Copenhagen School, interpretation of the extra-biblical text would differ, depending on the perspective from which it is read (Hjelm 2019:73-74).

We return to the role of religion in the context of occupancy and history of the region and to the interpretation held by biblical archaeologists. Bernard Lewis (2013:242) explains: “Christians and Jews share many things, starting with the Old Testament, and the whole religious culture that is based on it. Even when outlawed and persecuted, Jews were an important part of Western civilisation to which they made a significant contribution.”

Notwithstanding the advent of anti-Semitism in the Late Middle Ages, most probably tied to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the relationship between Christian and Jew remained tied to common religious roots. However, the Muslim and Jewish tradition with its similarities as a lifestyle religion and a lived tradition remained at loggerheads (Lewis 2013:243).

The site of Megiddo is a good example where the debates around the archaeology, the biblical text and the physical and metaphysical space of the historical narrative intersect. Megiddo was extensively excavated over the previous century and past decades have revealed much that could corroborate the biblical text regarding the dynasties of David and Solomon, and the United Monarchy between Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. Apart from the Early Bronze Age findings, scholars still argue that some of the excavated material and structures do not necessarily reveal conclusively that there were signs of conquests, armed conflict, evidence of an Israelite army, as well as the Solomonic rebuilding of the city and the palace (Silberman et al. 1999:33-39). This has subsequently been refuted by the majority of scholars, which potentially rules out significant interventions by the Judaeen kingdom of the south and that it was a single event. It may rather have been a Northern Kingdom dominance of the region under Ahab and the Omride dynasty. Finkelstein (2013:35) holds the following view:

Most likely, then, the late Iron I horizon in northern Israel came to an end in more than one devastation. This conclusion renders the earthquake and single military campaign theories invalid. The destructions in the north must therefore be understood as representing a period of unrest that stretched over several decades. A reasonable historical explanation would be to associate them with raids on the valley's strongholds by groups from the central highlands. These were either assaults by individual bands or the attempts of an early highlands-Israelite territorial entity to expand into areas of the northern valleys bordering on it. It is noteworthy that when these towns were resettled in the early Iron IIA – probably by mixed groups of valley people and highlanders – they continued uninterrupted into the early ninth century, the time of the Omride dynasty. The fact that

this later phase in the sites in the northern valleys features north Israelite material culture characteristics strengthens the hypothesis that Israelites from the hill country were responsible for the destructions at the end of the previous period—during the late Iron I. Needless to say, there is no extrabiblical textual material to shed light on these affairs, and it is impossible to securely connect them to events described in the Bible, since the historicity of episodes that ostensibly took place before the ninth century B.C.E. is questionable.

Nevertheless, Ussishkin (2019) is still adamant about the separation of religion and archaeology. He explains:

Now there is of course another problem in all this. And here again I am standing alone. I feel that I am a technician and I deal with archaeology and I understand the archaeological techniques. I understand the discipline, the tools we have, but when you get to the Bible or to any other historical sources, some external sources, that is completely a different discipline.

According to him,

[The] Bible is a great document and a great source but can be very problematic as people are studying it for hundreds of years, and now with modern methods and so on. But it is a discipline by itself, the method of studying the Bible are completely different from studying the methodology of archaeology. It is a different subject; a different profession and I feel that the Bible should be dealt with by biblical scholars. When archaeologists are starting to deal with the Bible, the result is simply some childish mess, because it is not their discipline, because it is not what they are used to dealing with. It is not the way they are thinking.

Ussishkin (2019) elaborates: “So, I’m for a complete separation between the Bible and biblical studies on the one hand and archaeology on the other hand.” He explains it by giving an example: “If you have problems with your teeth, you go to a dentist. And if you have problems with your eyes you do not go to a dentist, you go to an eye specialist.” The same applies here, but the tendency in Israeli archaeology is now different, particularly at Tel Aviv University. Ussishkin (2019) explains that two dominant figures, Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman, believe that you should mix the disciplines. They believe “archaeology relies on the Bible and the Bible relies on archaeology, and if you want the truth, the truth lies in the middle between the two”. Ussishkin (2019) adds:

Finkelstein can deal with the Bible, but he is a terrible biblical scholar, because he doesn’t understand the discipline, and is probably not appreciated by other biblical scholars. Nadav Na’aman is a great historian but understands nothing about archaeology. They are trying to combine things and when you see modern articles now, you see a mixture of archaeology and the Bible. One sentence deal with some archaeological pottery and the next sentence deals with some biblical things.

Ussishkin (2019) does not like it and is opposed to this approach.



Ussishkin has argued this approach at length. He is cited in arguing that the continuation of describing artefacts in a biblical context has continued to give the proponents of minimalism ammunition to criticise the veracity of biblical archaeology, as Balter (2000:30) points out:

Other archaeologists, however, believe the minimalists have some valid points. 'We have to completely separate biblical research on one hand and archaeology on the other,' says Tel Aviv University archaeologist David Ussishkin. Together with Finkelstein, Ussishkin has recently concluded that monumental architecture at Megiddo and other sites attributed to Solomon and interpreted as evidence for the United Monarchy dates from later periods-research that is often cited by the minimalists as support for their position.

As far as prominent historian Lester Grabbe is concerned, this frustration of Ussishkin is shared. Grabbe (2007:14) argues that, for a historian as well as the general public who are not archaeologists, these arguments and debates can be infuriating and need to be addressed. He uses the Finkelstein and Faust debate. He states:

This question of the extent to which the Bible has been used to interpret the artefactual data is a current issue of debate. Faust naturally does not want to be tarred with the brush of relying on the Bible instead of the archaeology, but I think Finkelstein is sincere in believing that Faust (or those whom he cites) have been unduly influenced by the biblical data. Indeed, it seems to me that Faust does not fully answer Finkelstein's charge that Faust has relied on W. G. Dever who in turn has relied on J. S. Holladay, who has relied on the Bible - in dating red-slipped and hand-burnished pottery. This is an area where I would like to ask a pottery expert.

On the opposite end of this debate though we see that biblical descriptions in textbooks for the student often refer to the magnificence of the United Monarchy and this has come under the scrutiny of historians such as Cargill (2001:316), who refers to the use of such terminology in education:

I am certainly not insisting that authors of Western Civilization texts for university classes should agree with the suggestions made about ancient Israel in recent decades by scholars such as those whom I have cited. What I am saying is that it is bad scholarship, and bad pedagogy, simply to ignore an important body of recent work, offering adult students a literalist-leaning account that is by scholarly standards probably twenty years out of date. At the very least, textbook authors should include more critical scholars' works and some minimalist works in their recommended readings, so that students would have a chance to confront such arguments on their own.

This ultimately questions the impact of a United Monarchy on the history of Israel. Nevertheless, the site remains an enigmatic symbol of the history of the Israelites, referring to the death of the Judean King Josiah in a battle with the Egyptians, as well as later Christian narratives of the final battle of Armageddon. Silberman et al. (1999:39) observe as follows:

The death of Josiah at Megiddo had enormous implications. With the political hopes of the Kingdom of Judah dashed, expectations for the future of the Davidic dynasty shifted from military to metaphysical - to a messiah or saviour who would return to earth to restore the House of Israel. This vision has been preserved in the vivid prophecies of the New Testaments Book of Revelation, themselves perhaps based on distant memories of

invading Egyptian armies, Canaanite coalitions, and Israelite ambitions to control this important nexus of agricultural richness and vital overland trade routes. At Megiddo, the current excavations – scheduled to resume next summer – continue to unravel the complex interconnections between apocalyptic myth, biblical legend, and the archaeological evidence of the city’s long history.

To this very day, Megiddo remains a fascinating site with a very long history of the region, representing a rich and intricate tapestry of human culture and its contribution to biblical and extra-biblical texts.

This to a large extent is the problem that the archaeology in Israel, and more specifically in Jerusalem, faces. The Arab and the Jew both have everything to lose. The archaeology in Jerusalem directly affects the daily lives and traditions of both groups. In the *National Geographic* December 2019 edition, the archaeology of Jerusalem is equated to a political and public bun fight, but far more serious. Yuval Baruch, Chief of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) has the following to say: “Archaeology in Jerusalem is so sensitive that it touches not just the research community but politicians and the general public” (Lawler 2019:42).

On the other side of the fence, the work of the IAA is viewed with extreme suspicion. Yusuf Natsheh, director of Islamic archaeology, states that “[h]ere archaeology is not merely about scientific knowledge – it is a political science” (Lawler 2019:50).

The moment archaeology transects the religious domain of both the non-secular Arab and Jewish communities, the reaction to archaeological evidence is perceived in a similarly negative fashion, regardless of identity. It is an issue of religion and here there are no grey areas. Ze’ev Herzog (2019) explains and makes an interesting observation:

During the early days there was no direct political or religious influence on us. It was, however, in the back of our minds. Generally, there is no real pressure from national or religious powers on us as archaeologists. There are views and criticisms though. There were some right-wing thoughts on this such as that the biblical stories are confirmed by archaeology and there is no basis for this nonsense.

In the middle you find archaeologists like Amihai Mazar, who reacted and said, they must look at the glass as half full, not only as half empty. There are many positive achievements in biblical archaeology. Herzog shows his disappointment when he says: “So, basically there was no reaction of the orthodox. They did not care. They do not regard archaeology as important.”

There is a direct link between the veracity of excavation in the media and the funders of these projects in Jerusalem, which unfortunately does not always happen in favour of those

scholars and archaeologists who do not have access to the money. In addition, a second factor is the abundance of potential excavations that may reveal the identity and ethnical roots. These are concentrated on and are heavily funded by various trusts and stakeholders. Historical archaeology, on the other hand, is neglected as it does not draw the cash from benefactors, and this is to the detriment of the Palestinians and Palestinian archaeology. The unintended consequence of this is that archaeological theory takes a back seat, and the archaeology has thus become open to perceived ideological exploitation as confirmed by some of the above statements in the media as well as from scholars. The debate on this continues but more of this follows in the next section.

### 3.1.3 Politics, ideology and nationalism

Jerusalem has become a focal point in the battle for writing history and since the war in 1967 and the seizure of East Jerusalem, we have seen an increase on the reliance and the use of archaeology to peg down the arguments for Jewish right for occupation during the modern era. The excavations in and under Jerusalem are further compromised in the left-wing media by the funding of these excavations by a right-wing cultural organisation.

An Al Jazeera journalist, Samuel N Gilbert, reported that according to Rafi Greenberg, a professor of archaeology at Tel Aviv University, “Israel has used archaeology as one of the weapons in this ground war about expanding the Jewish presence in Jerusalem, particularly in Silwan” and “[t]hat is what has been happening over the past 15 years or so. A combination of excavation and declaration of areas as natural parks that now surround the Old City” (Gilbert 2013).

Mizrahi (2019) from Emek Shaveh concurs with the point above as follows:

I’m trying to say that it is slightly more complicated in Israel. If you find layers of the Jewish history, or an ancient synagogue, or from the Bar Kokhba revolt, or evidence of a Jewish temple, everything is part of the history of this place. We feel connected to it, but it is also part of the history of the entire place, and it doesn’t give us the right to expel people from their homes as if they are not part of the history. And this history is part of the history of the land.

He explains further on:

It could be Jewish, it could be Muslim, it could be Christian, but we cannot divide or ascribe it to nationalism and Israeli identity alone. The main thing we are trying to say is that history is always nationalistic, but archaeology also must remember that it talks about a place and about different aspects that we cannot claim as our nationality. To communicate this is our main goal at Emek Shaveh.

My observation when I spoke to Mizrahi (2019) and when I later went onto the internet site of Emek Shaveh is that they are following the international guidelines as set out by UNESCO regarding heritage preservation, but that these guidelines are not necessarily always followed by the authorities, as we see in the case of Lifta and East Jerusalem excavations. Israeli heritage management must be a prime candidate for efficient heritage management, given the tension and conflict that are ever-present.

Perring and Van der Linde (2009:199) make an important point:

Culture is not only a prime arena for conflict – conflict also sits at the core of any attempts to deal with cultural heritage in practice. This contested nature of cultural heritage comes to the fore in the value-based approaches to archaeological heritage management that have been promoted by international organisations such as ICOMOS and UNESCO, where cultural “significances” are defined by assessing the values of a range of stakeholders. But values in this sense are not intrinsic, static, or inherent: post-modern critiques have taught us that values are intrinsically linked to people’s motivations, that they are subjective, contextual, and dynamic. Values therefore often confront each other, which is why the act of balancing conflicting values is actually at the core of all heritage management practice. The real questions here of course, are about relative power: who has the power to decide which values are to be upheld in the archaeological process, what is the role and responsibility of archaeologists in this, and finally, against what purpose, or vision, do we prioritise the multitude of values?

To a large extent, historical archaeology is not practised much and there is a feeling of discontent regarding the management of all heritages. The pivotal point of exploration is the links in and under Jerusalem that are grabbing the attention of scholars and the international media. We have seen tensions rising among the residents within and outside the Old City regarding the diggings going on below (Lawler 2019:67).

Any mention of more recent layers of occupation is dismissed by the guides as “not very old” or “just an Arabian village” (Gilbert 2013).

Archaeology in Jerusalem, to a large extent, has allowed the media a narrative of reasons for excavation to be dominated by left-wing media and is clearly not doing the discipline any favour. We see an Indiana Jones adventure story unfolding. The historicity and the contents of stratigraphic layers above the area of interest are of very little interest and thus lost forever. In some of these excavations the agenda is clearly driven by more than just scholarly research. We see it from the following:

Hamed Salem, a Palestinian archaeologist and professor at Birzeit University, spoke to Al Jazeera about the dangers of settler-run archaeological tourism. ‘As a Palestinian and an academic this is outrageous, as it is clearly connecting archaeology to the politics,’ Salem said. ‘The City of David Park has hundreds of thousands of internationals visiting each year exposed to the settler agenda. It is clear they want to justify the settlements in Jerusalem and everywhere. This important historical site is no longer an archaeological park; it’s an ideological park’ (Greenberg 2013).

Furthermore, Jerusalem-based Israeli archaeologist, Yonathan Mizrahi, explained to Al Jazeera: “When they [Israelis] think about their belonging to Israel it is about Jerusalem. It is not about Haifa, it’s not about Tel Aviv, it’s not even West Jerusalem. It is the historical [holy] basin. And archaeological excavation has been the main tool to represent this belonging” (Greenberg 2013).

In November 2019, Mizrahi also had a view of my question about the influence of nationalism on archaeological interpretations and he agreed that one can never fully remove the influence of politics from archaeology and that there are many factors to consider.

He said the following:

Archaeology is about two things; it is about excavating the land to learn about history. History is a nationalistic subject in general. The land is in many ways creating the nation who are occupying the place. And when you put them together, it is nationalism. That is something very concrete.

According to him,

Israeli, archaeology is very nationalistic in general and it is part of the nationalistic idea and identity. So, it is very much part of the identity, but it is not dealt with every day, but archaeological finds, especially in Israel when it is dated or oriented with the Jewish identity or history, is something that’s always gets published (Mizrahi 2019).

Similarly, Trigger (1984:358) argues that all archaeology has elements of nationalism weaved into it: “Most archaeological traditions are probably nationalistic in orientation. The development of European prehistoric archaeology was greatly encouraged by the post-Napoleonic upsurge of nationalism and romanticism. Some of this archaeological activity was directed towards strengthening patriotic sentiments and in these cases, it often received substantial government patronage.”

I would argue that statehood and history are indeed obstacles to overcome when excavating the past. The “new archaeology” during the 1960s tried to free itself from the shackles of politics and ideology by approaching archaeology in “universal generalisations” (Trigger 1984:366), but this remains problematic to this day as we see that the funding and the sanction of archaeology lie within the control of state-appointed authorities.

The excavation of a site must be done in such a way that the data can tell a whole story of all the people who have lived and are still living in the region or specific areas in Jerusalem. In other words, would the excavations in modern-day Jerusalem still try to find Israelite occupation in the Iron Age and Late Bronze Age?

Mizrahi (2019) argues in this respect that archaeology is trying many things. He does not think that they are necessarily dealing with the archaeological layer of who is related to the Jewish people or the Israeli. But he thinks that beyond that, “eventually, archaeology is not just for people excavating or who are in academic conferences and talk about it, because they are talking about many things”. He proposes the following:

[A]rchaeology is very much about what has been presented later, so it means that one can find many layers, ... you can find the archaeology of the Muslim period, the Byzantine period, Roman period, but from all these layers eventually, you put one story forward and ... the question is what kind of a story is been told to the people and the role archaeology plays in that context.

According to Mizrahi (2019), they have a cemetery on the Mount of Olives that is undoubtedly important to the Jewish people, but they also have a battle over the land. He adds: “The cemetery is identified as Jewish and thus as Israeli, and there is an attempt to say this is a place that needs to be under Israeli control” (Associated Press: Fox News 2011). As an archaeologist, Mizrahi works for Emek Shaveh, whose aim it is to promote scholarly archaeology based on the non-politicisation of archaeology, especially as far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned. It is concerning that much of the Israeli activity in East Jerusalem is heedless of its Palestinian residents.

Raz Kletter argues that the current excavations in East Jerusalem are very much influenced by political motives, as well as that of right-wing members in organisations such as in the IAA. The deployment of non-archaeological staff in the management functions of these organisations to a large extent reflects a bias towards politics and a non-scientific approach to the archaeology. He further argues that the image of the organisations is presented as “pure science” and “... claim that they excavate only because it is necessary; their work is always objective and scientific, without involvement with politics” (Kletter 2020:24). In conjunction with this, they see El-Ad, the NGO concerned with Israeli heritage, playing a major role (Kletter 2020:18). This opinion is also held by Mizrahi (2019) from Emek Shaveh. Kletter (2020) argues that the close cooperation of the IAA and bodies such as El-Ad is problematic, saying that “... promoting and executing excavations for such bodies, the IAA indirectly supports their ideology. By granting them governmental authority and legitimacy. In addition, years of close cooperation with bodies like El-Ad and Ateret Cohanim created a routine, in which the IAA is exposed to the ideologies of these bodies daily” (Kletter 2020:19).

This opinion is, however, not to argue that the excavation in Jerusalem is done in an unscientific manner. Amihai Mazar (2019) argues that such a view would be unfair. He holds the opinion that the younger generation of archaeologists is to a large extent only directed by historical objectivity. He also holds that politics and religion do not necessarily dictate the polarity or a schism in current archaeology, which is so often quoted, and that it is not possible to make a clear-cut assumption on this. According to him,

They are not divided ... archaeologists who work in Israel are a clever group of people and broadminded, who furthermore today – the young ones, most of them – are not motivated at all by any ideology. They are only motivated by their scientific motivation. The desire to study the past. The reconstruction of the past and some of them who are interested of course in the relationship between archaeology and Jewish history is still there. Especially those who deal with the Iron Age and the Second Temple period (Mazar 2019).

He confirms that the relationship between the archaeologists working in Israel is strong but that “the number of those archaeologists who deal with this subject is not the majority. It will be a small group. And even these people are not motivated by ideology” (Mazar 2019). He further argues the point that among his own graduate students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem this is not the case:

The people who are doing Jewish archaeology for example of the Second Temple period and of synagogues of the recent period. Yes, they probably identify themselves with being Israeli – but I don’t think the ideological motivation is very strong today. It is more professional, and the personal desire to study the past (Mazar 2019).

In the article “The Bible and archaeology” by Eric Meyers, the author highlights the following:

The Israelis, nonetheless, are the real practitioners of biblical archaeology today. In this respect, they are the true inheritors of the Albright tradition. Yet, because the Israeli archaeologists are institutionally isolated from those who study Bible or Jewish history, in an intellectual as well as a physical or administrative sense, a gap is thereby created between the literary historian and the cultural historian (Meyers 1984:37).

This was articulated in the article during the emergence and adoption of the new archaeology. The following questions then remain: Have we seen a difference since then? Is the flurry of archaeological activity under Jerusalem in adherence to what the discipline demands i.e., objectivity, or is it part of a broader scheme and a project of ideology and is this archaeology undermining the rights of ownership? I keep these questions broad and nonspecific as this thesis is not a political analysis or a debate. But it is necessary to consider the possible answers to these questions. This being that the search under Jerusalem must not be an attempt to revisit the past with the sole intention of making this past part of the present and that which goes on above the ground. In an ideal world the question would be if one

should condemn past practices of offerings to the gods as inhuman or diabolical, so would it be to make the past justification for a present-day status quo or the maintenance thereof. However, as Kletter (2020:181) points out in the case of the east Jerusalem excavations:

There is no “pure” archaeology free of power relations unless we agree to cut archaeology off from the world of the living and never lift our eyes from the excavation squares. The professional work of the IAA excavating archaeologists in East Jerusalem is surrounded by a turbulent sea of unprofessional situations, considerations, and decisions. Decisions by entrepreneurs and the IAA management of where to excavate, for what purpose and how to present the remains have political effect on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each side seeks to demonstrate its rights to the city, but the conflict is extremely uneven, since Israel rules the city and holds the keys.

One is left with a question. How have the Israeli citizens been affected and what is the reaction to these archaeological exploits and its links to nationalism and identity? Mizrahi (2019) made an interesting observation on some similar linkage between the early years of archaeology and some current projects:

I think the Yadin era was a very romantic era, but I think he didn't see the difference between archaeology and the Israeli identity. It was very clear to him to excavate at Masada and to go to Bar Kokhba to work on the scrolls. In many ways, he formed the way archaeology was done in Israel for many years. A lot was influenced by him, but he did not influence everything.

But after Yadin something very interesting happened to archaeology, as explained by Mizrahi (2019):

There was less interest by the public in archaeology, for example in the 1970s, and 1980s. People did not really care what were found. They were more concerned with living, the state being 70 years old, so that generation were getting old. Now we see the use of archaeology in a nationalistic way again and how it is more used by politicians. It is now used again as in the time of Yadin – it is used by politicians to justify our belonging.

Perhaps in the summary of this part of the thesis, it would be pertinent to conclude with a message from beyond the grave of an archaeologist who had made it his life ambition to unify the histories of both the Arab world and the Israeli under one archaeological umbrella of research. In an article first published three years after his death in 1992, Albert Glock noted the following:

It is clear that the story communicated by the winners is heavily biased, filtering out the unwelcome “noise” of the vanquished. If it is true that the cultural heritage of a land belongs to all its inhabitants, it would seem to follow that the task of excavating, interpreting, and presenting the archaeological evidence of the past should fall to agencies less eager than governments to defend claims to legitimacy. Such tasks could be entrusted to university scholars representing the diversity of living cultural traditions in any one land, while governments should continue to have responsibility for protection and preservation (Glock 1995:50).



Glock (1994: 83-84) further explains that Palestinian archaeology would be superior to Israeli archaeology as it is relevant to the current lived in space of the people. He argues:

What is the rationale for Palestinian archaeology different from that which has been promoted by Western archaeologists? First, if archaeology is the study of the materialization of human thought and action, then it is not bound by chronology. In other words, archaeology is not merely the study of what is old, though it certainly includes antiquity; instead, archaeology should attempt to correlate the adaptation of materials and space to human needs. Second, since the past is dead, it can be interpreted only by analogy with human experience.

He also emphasises:

To study the forces compelling change that are close in time and where the documentation is controllable makes it possible to generate explanatory hypotheses about the deeper past than can be tested by the archaeological record. This means that Palestinian archaeology is not only more relevant to living Palestinians, but also qualitatively better archaeology.

Here is a clarion call for academia and researchers, as well as for responsible government, that heritage preservation should not only take the history of other occupants of the land into consideration, but also ask that politicians should stay clear of academia. The history of people is considered sacrosanct and cannot be erased from memory without an expected backlash. We see on a global scale and through state intervention in archaeology and historical monuments a tendency to want to do that. I am not including here negative heritage such as the holocaust during the Second World War or the memory of leaders who were responsible for pogroms and the death of millions, but rather a respect for the memory of others and their cultural heritage, as well as their homes. It would be best to preserve the memories of others as you would want to preserve your own.

### 3.1.4 Excavation and theory

Theoretical approaches and models in archaeology is a complex topic. The authors of these theories rely on a wide perspective, not only on the epistemology but on philosophical discourses to pin down the correct way of interpretation of archaeological data and then create a credible picture of the past. Archaeological artefacts, unless textual, are mute and do not reveal their context easily. It is the job of the archaeologist and a team of experts to extract this. Gone are the days of a Heinrich Schliemann who, upon reading Homer's *Iliad*, would then excavate at Hissarlik for the fabled Troy in a non-scientific or archaeological manner and essentially distort reality and the past (Moorehead 2016:103). This will not happen today. Regardless of the theory-making and the choice of theory or the methodology chosen, it is still the responsibility of the archaeologist and the team of experts to interpret

and find the ‘relations’ between the assemblages of artefacts. As Fowler (2016:235) notes: “Theories are embedded in configurations of things, materials, and techniques, and vice versa.” Therefore, “[i]t falls to us to understand the composition of the assemblage and the particular shape and nature of the phenomena that emerge temporarily while that assemblage endures.”

As mentioned, the archaeology of Israel is of a very high standard. It is taught in many of the top universities in Israel which rank very high on the global ranking scale for excellence. However, there remains this perception among certain schools and groups that the scope of the archaeology is limited to certain periods only. The result of this perception then becomes a political and ideological discourse, which ultimately may taint the archaeology with biased intention. All the interviewees from the universities, independents as well as Palestinian scholars, hold the opinion that the discipline of archaeology in Israel is excellent.

However, there has been a realisation among archaeologists that ethnicity remains problematic in the discipline as determined during the 1990s at conferences and in papers. Jones (1994:21) reveals:

Despite the contextual approach to ethnicity advocated in a number of presentations at the “Archaeology of Israel” conference, there was still considerable evidence of historical determinism in the analysis of past ethnic groups. The problem with an over-reliance on historical sources is that it tends to result in an essentialising and primordial approach to ethnicity if historically named groups are accepted as given, bounded, uniform entities. If we recognise that ethnicity is a dynamic and contextual phenomenon then we have to accept that literary references to named groups themselves constitute particular situational expressions of ethnicity which are interwoven with economic and political interests.

As Mazar (2019) points out: “Archaeology in Israel is on a very high level professionally speaking. Lots of publications and good work comes from it. There is lots of cooperation with scientists and other disciplines and sciences. And all these problems of ideology and nationalistic motivation is really behind us.” Mazar (2019), however, does agree that to some extent the theory in archaeology and in historical archaeology is not given the necessary attention, as will be discussed later.

William Dever, archaeologist and scholar from the United States, believes that theorising in the archaeology in Israel is currently not that prominent among the older generation, but that it is more prevalent among the younger generation of scholars (Dever 2019).

The utilisation of theory or lack of it can be problematic and here follows an analysis and critique specific to biblical archaeology. The use of theory in Israeli archaeology or foreign

non-Israeli digs in Jerusalem, for example, can be presupposed by specific searches for the occupation of certain ethnic populations, as well as the continuation of a specific discourse or dogma. Biblical archaeology in the Holy Land has at its roots the text as we have established from a variety of opinions. The pursuit of comparative materiality and discourses lent from the text through archaeology should guard against this self-evident *a priori* methodology or a disregard for any other opposing discourses or contradictions, concerning the materiality of the objects or how the site is treated. For example, an *a priori* manifesting in archaeology, as observed by Wightman (1990:5,19), is “Solomonic archaeology”. This grew from an idea, “an intuition tending to become part of a fixed body of basic assumption that was eventually to be regarded as a priori fact. Absolute dates for the beginning and end of the Iron Age in Palestine had been founded from the beginning of scholarly investigation on pottery styles of datable contexts ...” Moreover, “it has been widely accepted among biblical scholars that Solomon’s reign was characterized primarily by massive fortifications.” This paradigmatic thinking was maintained for many years until Ussishkin (2019), among others, proved the facts to be different. He explains:

If the facts don’t fit, you simply put them aside and if you deal with biblical archaeology that is the situation more or less. I am not a religious person, in fact, I am a declared atheist. I believe in what I see, I believe life as it is, but I do not believe in all kinds of religious convictions, whatever the religion is. But most people who deal with biblical archaeology come to it from a religious point of view, to start with. First, of course, it was with all the Christian archaeologists who were interested in the Holy Land because of the theological aspect and so on.

He does not think that the Jewish archaeologists who are now dominating the field are much better, because “they believe in the biblical agenda whether they admit it or not. And they enter facts whatever they think and whatever they do.” He further explains:

The symbolism regarding the question of Jerusalem is to what happened in Solomonic times, in the times of the United Monarchy. If you look at the biblical story, it was a magnificent city at the time of King Solomon. There was a temple, there was a palace, and mainly there was a great city which was fortified. If you look at it as archaeological record – the results of archaeological excavations – there is practically nothing.

In a purely religious context, such a preconception manifests in the archaeology of the Christian religion. One of the main proponents of this is the evangelical fraternity. As Fantalkin (2019) illustrates: “You have certain scholars who have agendas, and the archaeology and research are done before the actual excavation. So, they already know what they are supposed to find before they start the excavation.” From America, for example, a lot of evangelicals go to Shiloh and they know exactly what they are looking for – they are looking for an Ark. According to Fantalkin (2019),

... this is a different type of archaeology. However, on many occasions, these people are very good archaeologists. They come from Baptist seminaries, and from some strange places in the United States with some strange ideas. Sometimes religious fanatics also, but on many occasions, they do good archaeology – good documenting of everything. They conserve the artefacts, but their interpretation is problematic, because from the outset they already know what they are looking for, so they have a story in waiting, and this is the problem. In critical archaeology, the facts come first. First, you have the remains and afterwards, you build your interpretation and not vice versa.

In this regard Michel Foucault (2002:118) states as follows:

The repeatable materiality that characterizes the enunciative functions reveals the statement as a specific and paradoxical object, but also as one of those objects that men produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose, and possibly destroy. Instead of being said once and for all – and lost in the past like the result of a battle, a geological catastrophe, or the death of a king – the statement, as it emerges in its materiality, appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced. Thus, the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows, or prevents the realisation of a desire, serves, or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry.

The Israeli and Palestinian question and the use or rejection of the archaeology of the region is a case in point and illustrates that interpretation cannot be based on presuppositions, as this would be unscientific according to the accepted definitions of science and empiricism.

Consequently, we have seen a more robust engagement with theory and knowledge of the materiality of archaeology and its evidence. However, there are some problems to overcome with this as it is not a clear cut and dried solution and archaeology must therefore, according to some theorists, conform to post-processualism to be validated by broader academia and to be labelled a science. But objectivity remains evasive. Hodder (1999:62) addresses this dichotomy as follows:

[I]t would appear that archaeological practice cannot easily be described as based around the testing of theory against data. Such description is under-mined by recognition that data are themselves “seen” through theory and pre-understanding. To some extent we ‘observe’ what we want to or are trained to observe. On the other hand, archaeologists are led by data in certain directions. They do seem to accommodate their views to their experience of the data. Therefore, rather than talking of “testing”, it is better to describe the archaeological process as based on “fitting”. Archaeologists seem to work by fitting theory and data together until a coherent whole is reached.

Hodder (1999:62) adds that “this fitting process works best if it aims to be non-dichotomous. It does not help to say that the data are either subjective or objective. It is more productive to acknowledge that the data are both constructed by us and that they objectively help to constitute our subjectivities.” I ask the question: To what extent then is biblical archaeology far off the mark? My research shows that theoretical indulgence in archaeology is not necessarily a foreign notion by scholars and at some universities in Israel, but that in earlier

years, theoretical approaches to archaeology could have been viewed with some trepidation. I am, however, not convinced that early processual archaeology in Israel has been a victim of non-theorising as it did not deal, for example, with colonialism, its constructs and its effect on the local people. I would argue that Late Bronze and Iron Age archaeology in Israel can utilise a multi-disciplinary approach, but it does not need a post-processual interpretation to be validated and accepted. It is, however, how this information is later treated and applied that matters.

To put this into context, Fantalkin (2019) explains: “Our archaeology at this stage is very reflective. Reflexivity and the interpretations; you cannot escape what you are. That means you cannot escape your gender, your political background, your family, the place of origin and your place within the framework of ongoing conflict and coexistence.” He gives an example:

There is no institutionalised apartheid as was the case in South Africa. We live with Arabs; we walk with Arabs and they are equal citizens of this state. But the various perceptions of what is going on, or where we are heading or what is supposed to be done consists of different mentalities, different mental maps in our heads, sometimes even different aims. There is commonality though, and that is we all want the same good education for our kids and prosperity.

Ideally, archaeology should be completely clean of nationalistic ideas, but Fantalkin (2019) says he “cannot guarantee that this is what is actually happening in the field. Even for those who have research agendas that are on the surface completely neutral and scientific with no connections to nationalistic ideology, inadvertently falls victim to it because of reflexivity.”

In addition, Hodder (2003:56) argues:

It is precisely when the past is claimed by present communities that a reflexivity has been forced on archaeology. By reflexivity here, I mean initially the recognition and incorporation of multiple stakeholder groups, and the self-critical awareness of one’s archaeological truth claims as historical and contingent. Post-colonial processes, global interactions, and the massive rise in the destruction of archaeological sites and monuments around the world have together created an awareness of divergent opinions about how the past should be managed.

In cities such as Jerusalem the management, as well as the public discourse, the motivation and aims of the research, as well as the ultimate use of the information, are critical. The act of iconoclasm needs not be a physical act only; it can also take on the form of frustration, discontent and even violence against the system.

Although not in Israel, but nevertheless illustrative of the notion of reflexivity, Hodder (1998:135) gives a practical example of the predicaments he faced at Çatalhöyük, a Neolithic

site in southern Anatolia, and how it was addressed. It all started with the theft of a bead from the site and the reaction of the local authorities concerning the ‘foreign’ archaeologist contingent that made up the excavation and the subsequent suspicion that permeated the media and the public discourse regarding Western influence as a possible negative entity. Hodder explains that this single act of theft could have scuppered the project in its entirety, as well as the sponsorship. From a theoretical point of view, he argues that the incident necessitated a wider discourse than a “thick description”. As he puts it:

[E]ven my use of ‘thick descriptions’ is situated within an academic discourse which might seem to be far removed from the events I am describing. I have constructed the events in a particular way because of my own interests. Indeed, any analysis of heritage in the East Mediterranean is ‘at a remove’; a past appropriated for intellectual gain (Hodder 1998:135, 136).

He goes on as follows:

Our own emphasis on ‘discourse’ within the ‘discipline’ underlies the account I have given. I have written as if the processes I have been describing could be observed, channelled, controlled. Any attempt to write about how the Çatalhöyük past is used, any attempt to write about how the past matters in the East Mediterranean cannot help but reduce historical processes to an organised scheme or flow.

In line with Hodder’s observation at Çatalhöyük, Fantalkin (2019) observed that, in the case of Israeli archaeology:

This reflexivity cannot always be under your control because it is your perspective, it is the way you interpret your finds. I always teach my students that you know the framework of postmodernism which in my view can be a bit too much sometimes. However, there is one important observation, nevertheless that the objective truth is probably unachievable. It is something that we should acknowledge that we cannot achieve – the truly objective scientific truth especially in humanities, especially in archaeology, especially in the interpretation of our finds.

However, he believes some opinions are just absurd and explains:

If you take the famous orientalism of Edward Said and you take it to the final step which is according to him; that any person who is European cannot by definition be completely free of nationalistic ideology and, therefore, cannot study Ancient Near Eastern cultures correctly. It is intrinsic racist when you say something like this because you deny the person of other nationalities, origin, skin colour, whether from Europe or any nation the possibility of conducting decent research.

He tells his students to be aware of these traps, which are all around, and they should understand them. Although the absolute truth is unachievable; they must try to achieve it despite this. What is important here is the process, as he explains: “... the process is important, and you must be frank with yourself about your limitations, your exposure, and different backgrounds. I must know this may influence my views, even without me acknowledging this and that I understand that this somehow influences my views.”

Fantalkin (2019) concludes by saying that nationalistic ideas most probably influence archaeological interpretations everywhere – not only in Israel, but in Israel it is sometimes even more prominent, because of the land and the story. The same can be said of Greece and Turkey. All these countries have a rich heritage, which belongs to many people in the respective countries and outside. It is the key here. Heritage belongs to many people. I may ask the question: To whom do the Byzantine periods belong? The answer perhaps is that it belongs to Christians from everywhere.

The interpretation of the archaeology, as well as the motivations of archaeologists, needs to be communicated to the broader public as well as to the wider media. The lesson that Hodder learnt at a Neolithic site such as Çatalhöyük, with no apparent linkage to current identities and histories, could have turned nasty. Communication is key to protect the integrity and indeed the reputation of archaeologists and the discipline in the media, but more specifically on social media where there is no control of the messaging. But it should be done with caution, as Hodder (1998:137) explains:

The aim here is to open the data from the site to multiple audiences, to allow different experiences of the site, to allow discovery in a range of different channels. But it is clear that there is no such thing as open multivocality. A certain level of knowledge is required to participate in hypertext presentations. And certain links and nodes are created by the producer of the hypertext. One has to make choices about what audiences are aimed at and what messages are given. As much as the Web and hypertext allow a greater diversity and openness of communication, the onus remains on the producer and writer to be reflexive about the impact of 'the text' in the world.

However, Hodder (1998:139) warns:

As much as those involved in the project may try to foster plurality and multivocality, the communication does not take place on a level playing-field. The techniques used on a site, from virtual reality to the sieving of micro-residues, promote a particular vision within a kaleidoscope. There is no solution to the paradoxes. Any attempt to 'make sense of it all', including the opposition between 'play' and 'passion', is itself a construct.

He also contends: "It is only in the concrete moments of engagement that the socio-politics of Çatalhöyük take their form."

Fantalkin (2019) further explains:

I was recently in St. Petersburg at a conference and I was talking to Russian priests. It was a theological conference, a seminary in St. Petersburg with hundreds of priests and I was talking about the excavation of a unique Byzantine church with inscriptions of Greek deaconesses which we found in Ashdod recently. I have told them frankly that this is not only our heritage, but we should also take care of this because this is in our land. We should develop, excavate, document, present it to the public if it is presentable, but it is also your heritage.

Fantalkin received a standing ovation because this is their heritage. The same is true for Islam, for Judaism and for many things. Fantalkin (2019) confirms the following:

The remains of the first hominid belong to everybody, but one must navigate between all of these – even if you know nationalistic ideas. Nationalistic ideas are for example the excavation of a site from a middle Palaeolithic period which has nothing to do with Jews or Arabs, but everyone wants to make it their special site. It is a common desire of any archaeologist to make his or her site special. So, you want to say we have the first site in the world where people originated or where animals were domesticated, where fire was first made, where we had the first presence of Neanderthals living together with Homo Sapiens etc. The following question can be asked: Is this a nationalistic idea? In a way, yes, because you want to glorify your state – the place where you live and the signs and artefacts which this place produces.

The above observation by Fantalkin then explains the negative publicity and experience of Hodder at Çatalhöyük. The broader public have a stake in archaeology and to disregard this is a mistake. The theory behind excavations in Jerusalem and in the Old City can be shown to be problematic, as illustrated by those done in what today is known as the Jewish Quarter. The sheer extent of these initial excavations in the Old City was famously described as “the mythological digs” and portrayed as follows: “the excavations focused on biblical through Second Temple times, those eras that had not only long composed the centre of disciplinary debate and practice and the basis for successful archaeological careers but, moreover, that had long formed the foundation of the Israeli colonial-national imagination” (Abu El-Haj 2001:130).

Aren Maeir (2019) from Bar-Ilan University had the following to say on this: “Nowadays there is a lot of archaeologists who are very much theory orientated. ... Archaeology in the Near East is one of the final dying manifestations of Western colonialism.” Wherever it is conducted in the Near East, except in Israel,

... it is like the great white hunter who comes along with a good methodology – he teaches the poorly educated locals, hires the workers from the local population who has to have a local archaeologist as a co-partner and who is very often a nice guy. However, in Israel, the farmers come and move in circles around them and making it difficult for the excavators. And they do not like that (Maeir 2019).

Maeir (2019) further states:

For many or quite a few decades, there has been this slow pull back from most projects, there are very few projects that was running the last few decades. Only recently they have started coming back and most of the foreign projects that were being run in Israel will be run by theologically orientated Bible schools. They were good guys, but they were not at the forefront of international-level research and [maybe] one of the reasons for that is because if someone from Harvard, Johns Hopkins, University of Chicago, excavate at sites in Turkey and Syria, they will tell the locals what is supposed to be done, and the locals will listen to them. Here in Israel, the locals will talk back.



Maeir elaborates and talks about his time when he was doing his PhD at the Hebrew University. He was part of a young cadre of up-and-coming archaeologists who were very much aware of theoretical archaeology – not because they were taught by most of their teachers, but because they read widely when they tried to infuse their research, but then they were overlooked because they were perceived as coming out of the *left* field. Nowadays most of the upper percentiles of good archaeology in Israel is extraordinary and good and infused with theory. Very often when you hear people talking about archaeology in Israel and the nationalistic issues, they are talking about things that were written and a situation that existed earlier and not what is happening now (Maeir 2019).

On the one hand, the excavations at the City of David and Silwan have one objective. It is to establish the truth or reality of the Kingdom of David as described in the biblical text or, at the very least, to lay down some connection with the historical past of a nation under the rule of a king. The establishment of lineage and continuity becomes *a priori*. Up until today, we see a scholarly debate regarding the sustainability of such a project. Funding is not a problem, but the destruction of layers from the Byzantine, Mameluke and Arab periods are of no importance.

One question regarding methodology, or rather a lack of it, may be found in excavations, not only in Jerusalem but elsewhere such as the Jezreel valley in the past. Nowadays, in some cases, they use heavy earth-moving equipment to dig down to specific layers. Abu El-Haj (1998:172) reflects on this:

[T]o understand more fully when and why bulldozers are used on excavation sites in Israel and Palestine, one has to consider not only questions of chronology and the search for a Jewish national past, but also a broader set of methodological and historiographical issues. One should examine the practical logic that guides archaeologists at work and determines how sites will be excavated and which remains will be carefully recorded and preserved. At both the Jezreel and the Jerusalem excavations, archaeologists moved through dirt rather quickly. They used pickaxes, shovels, large buckets, and bulldozers to reach more rapidly what they considered to be significant finds. The practical work of excavating favoured larger remains over smaller ones, locating significant finds on the basis of which specific loci would then be more carefully excavated for “smaller remains” that could illuminate the history of the architectural structures themselves or lend insight into the settlement patterns (for example) of “significant” stratigraphic level.

As a young man, David Ussishkin (1982:95) also expressed his views on the dominance of the biblical period in the excavation. Subsequently, in an interview with Ussishkin in 2019, he reiterated that, notwithstanding the dominance of the biblical text or the influence of the biblical period, the archaeologist remains the “technician”, and the interpretation by politicians or the media is not in the hands of the archaeologist.

He states as follows: “My view is simple on these things. I believe that the archaeologist is simply a technician and he must sort out the facts and leave the interpretations to others; if you are dealing with facts, usually it is very different from the interpretations, although the interpretations are unbelievable sometimes.” He makes an analogy to a fictitious character and mentions the famous detective, Hercule Poirot of Agatha Christie, as an example. According to him, Poirot “doesn’t adopt theories, doesn’t do anything, simply tries to deal with the facts and if the facts don’t fit the theories, he throws the theory out”. He states that this is of course very unpleasant for archaeologists, usually because they like the theories. In most cases, people go to dig because they have a theory which they try to prove. “And as you are dealing with stones, stones will not cry out, you can say whatever you want. That is where the matter rests.”

As a young man working at Lachish, Ussishkin touches on the emotiveness of excavating and the very romanticism of the space that is being excavated when he says the following:

On the other hand, it is very difficult for me to imagine archaeology in the Holy Land in the biblical period without connection to the Old Testament and without connection to the historical records, the historical sources, and the historical background. Personally, I cannot imagine myself working at a site like Lachish without being involved with the deep historical and biblical connections of the site. To Israeli archaeologists, this connection with the Old Testament, with the biblical sources, is deeply emotional, and it gives us a special satisfaction, perhaps even special happiness, when working in the profession of archaeology. I think that this is responsible for a large part of the motivation of Israeli archaeologists. At this point I have to add a note of clarification: our special interest in the biblical period does not mean that we neglect other periods in the archaeology of the country, such as the Chalcolithic and Islamic period (Ussishkin 1982:95).

Tarnas (1996:94), in a sense, confirms the above:

Theology and history were inextricably conjoined in the Hebrew vision. Acts of God and the events of human experience constituted one reality, and the biblical narrative of the Hebrew past was intended rather to reveal its divine logic than to reconstruct an historical record. As with Christianity, legend, and fact in the early history of Judaism cannot now be clearly distinguished.

Nevertheless, he also remarks that,

... although later biblical interpolations obscure precise emergence in the ancient Near East of a specific people with a monotheistic religion out of an earlier background (extending to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the early second millennium BCE) of seminomadic tribes with elements of polytheism in their worship, there would appear to be a definite historical core to the traditional Judaic self-understanding (Tarnas 1996:94).

In addition, the sense of the landscape at Lachish, as referred to by Ussihkin (2019) above, remains inextricably linked to its space. Similarly, this would apply to all places linked to

culture. According to Brittain (2016:259), this sense of place was already identified by Lewis Binford in the early 1980s and is becoming increasingly dominant in archaeological theory building. Brittain (2016:259) explains: "... places are regarded as significant, and as loci in which not only events occur, but in which memories are also formed or reawakened, and experiences unfold and correspond between participants, simultaneously binding and parting bodies."

The observation and experience that Ussishkin ascribes to Lachish, the place and his memories linked to the Holy Land are therefore linked and cannot be destroyed unless it is changed by "contemporary policy-making affecting the social values inscribed upon particular heritage sites or landscapes", as observed by Brittain (2016:259).

This, according to Ussishkin (2019), does not and should not detract from the factual data which includes the histories of others.

These 'exclusive' practices have to a large extent been stopped, but it must be noted that such methods were used by both Israeli and Arab scholars. In the mid-1990s, a mosque was built in a previous underground storeroom in Jerusalem. Three years later, when alterations to the Al Marwani Mosque took place, heavy earthmoving machinery was used to dig a new entrance to the Mosque and in the process potentially destroying enormous amounts of archaeological finds. Both sides, Israeli and Palestinians, blame and/or defend their reaction (Lawler 2019:60).

However, the question of ethnic and historical belonging is still an issue of significant importance and exploited in archaeology. The following view is held by some Palestinian protagonists and they charge that archaeology in Israel, and especially in Jerusalem, is "used as a weapon of occupation" (Lawler 2019:59).

Solimani (2019) corroborates the focus of these excavations by arguing as follows: "Nationalistic ideals are still very much in the motivation of Israel archaeology – they use the best methods – scientific and so on – to identify the strata. This is the main thing for many archaeologists who do biblical archaeology. So, it is still very strong." Solimani also confirms that the money that archaeology gets comes from politically motivated organisations.

The archaeological site becomes a tourist site – it focuses on this interpretation. It is a biblical site and or a Second Temple site – a period that is connected to the new Jewish nation or a synagogue of the Jewish. All the money that comes to this site is to lead

archaeology to work this site and to find these elements and to have the interpretation – and in the main, it is to strengthen this identity (Solimani 2019).

The influence of foreign funding and religious ideology is evident, as pointed out by Father Lionel Goa:

Yes, there is a big fight going on, from the City of David down to Silwan. It is to do with a lot of money and power, and they know they have the ultra-orthodox on their side. American money, local nationalistic excavators and of course, the religious powers of the ultra-orthodox are all just coming in together (Goa 2019).

The abovementioned comment by Lionel Goa is argued by Amit (2016:16):

The theoretical bias of the Jerusalem School in general and of Mazar in particular towards the maximalist position is depicted by Finkelstein as a ‘messianic outburst’, with a wink to the religious psychosis known as the Jerusalem syndrome. In the case of Mazar this accusation directly relates to the Israeli political discourse and to the agenda of the religious right-wing organizations that supported her work: Shalem Center and Elad.

Archaeology then finds itself at the mercy of a very powerful financial conundrum to overcome, which I am sure is also the case, globally. Monumental, religious and geopolitical excavations are currently the three areas where the money is spent, and the importance of these is self-evident. To a large extent, any archaeological projects that do not fall within the scope of this will have limited funding and thus limited interest from volunteers and the media, as well as limited political support.

In addition, some organisations, such as Emek Shaveh, which is on the ideological and political left as far as archaeology is concerned, have expressed the following about some of the methodologies and techniques that are being used again:

[I]t is very important to Finkelstein to be at the center, and indeed his views reflect the Israeli political center. Eilat Mazar and Elad association are on his right; Shlomo Sand and Emek Shaveh association are on his left. Unlike the op-ed of Finkelstein, the reports of the left-wing association Emek Shaveh, define the excavations at East Jerusalem/Al-Quds “as a means to control the village of Silwan and the Old City of Jerusalem.” Emek Shaveh also claims that some of the archaeological activities in the region are supervised by Elad and do not meet the scientific standards, especially the sifting project of the debris which were removed from the Temple Mount (Amit 2016:17).

Steiner (2016:79) remarks, rather scathingly, that there has been a return to the fervour with which the main protagonists of biblical archaeology during the 19th century have approached the current excavation of the City of David. “Digging with ‘Bible and spade’ seems to be fashionable once more, such as it was in the nineteenth century. Starting an excavation in search of King David’s palace, or interpreting finds in Jerusalem in the framework of biblical stories, is deemed proper archaeological practice again.”

According to Solimani (2019), one of the questions is what Fantalkin (2019) mentioned: they have too many sites here, so much material, that they are too busy to take care of the material and publish and describe and worry that they do not have time for theory. They must deal with these aspects. But he thinks that it is connected to what he has said before:

It is totally pure politics, because if the archaeology starts to deal with the questions of identity, questions of economy, questions of racism, immigration – destruction, they have to deal with what is happening here and have to say what they think about it. They will have to criticise it, and they do not want to do that. Because if they do that, they will pay a heavy price. In academics, the price will be to get a position or a job. You cannot work for the government; you cannot get money for projects and you can lose your ability to do your profession because in Israel most of the archaeology is handled by the government. Most of the archaeologists are employed by the Israeli Antiquity Authority.

Unfortunately, they are in the hands of the government.

On the other hand, in regions such as Israel, where there is a plethora of potential sites, the justification for theory as *sine qua non* to archaeological excavation and methodology is not necessarily above everything else and therefore a prerequisite.

The region is one big archaeological site, and Alex Fantalkin (2019) from Tel Aviv University highlights it. He explains “that there is a certain truth in this, that as far as theorising is concerned and comparing to many leading British theoreticians, Israel is way behind”. He says they “do teach about this in the classes. They teach post-colonial theories, post-processual, post-modern modernity, hybridisation, but usually, they do not produce theoretical studies, which are purely theoretical”, and he thinks the reason is that “the amount of archaeological material here is so huge that we prefer to deal with the excavation and not with theorising. That is perhaps the reason and why it is the case” (Fantalkin 2019).

Both Shanks and Hodder (1995:13) would agree with the above. They argue that, regardless of theory, the accumulation of data from a site is much more than coming up with just the artefacts. The archaeological project and all its variables and constraints need to be considered before the interpretation and publication occur. They explain: “The ‘objective past’ will not present itself. The remains of a prehistoric hut circle will not excavate themselves. A pot will not thin section itself and appear upon a microscope slide beneath the gaze of a cataplectic archaeologist. Work has to be done in the sense that the remains of the past have to be incorporated into *projects*.” In Israel, these projects are and have always been manifold.

This *project*, according to Shanks and Hodder (1995:13), consists of a multitude of variances that need to be managed by an archaeologist and, as they explain:

All these are brought together in an archaeological project which constitutes the reality of the past, makes it what it is. It is within such contingent (there is nothing necessary about them) assemblages that the past comes to be perceived and known. If we were to report objectively the detail of an excavation, all the resonances and associations, all the thoughts, materials and events, the result would be very confusing and of perhaps infinite length. This again the paradox that specificity of detail brings into doubt the validity of sensory evidence, and points to the necessity of creative choice.

I leave a question hanging here. Is this not what biblical archaeology has been doing and its only critique then being its over-reliance on the text to guide it along?

It coincides with one of my opening statements of the thesis that the mute object only enjoys a true reality while it is not observed. Once excavated, it becomes the observer's reality, and it is then given a meaning and a context to its surroundings.

In this regard, Fantalkin (2019) further argues about some of the critiques levelled at the lack of contemporary European theory. According to him, they have material and when you look at the history of archaeology, you see "big advances of people, from Nordic countries like Thomsen and Worsaae and others. The ones that bring the first system of Bronze, Iron and Stone Ages and try to make some classification of real artefacts." Fantalkin also states that they worked alone and discovered all kinds of very peculiar deposits like shells in Denmark, heaps of shells, and things like this which would necessitate theory: "You have historical sources, and you are at the interchange of civilisation. You have endless movement of people back and forth. You have deposits from all periods." He thinks this is the major influence because "you invest more of your energy and interest in the finds and less in theorising. Which is not that good perhaps ... but this is the situation here in Israel" (Fantalkin 2019).

Mazar (2019) agrees with Fantalkin (2019) when he states:

I would say that the answer is as follows: It is correct that to a large extent archaeologist in Israel ... are interested in archaeological theory. It is a fact because we were raised on a kind of historical school of thought – our main concern was to relate archaeology to history to biblical studies – not so much to anthropology and social studies.

He explains that archaeology is learned at Tel Aviv University as an independent field of knowledge. It is not part of anthropology as in America and England to a large extent, but also not as in other European countries. Their heritage is more European – Germany and

France. The theories of Binford and Hodder are not so much utilised, especially by the older generation. He clarifies:

The younger generation is more interested in theory in archaeology and scholars like Bunimovitz in Tel Aviv, Avi Faust in Bar Ilan University, Aren Maeir in Bar Ilan University or even here at the Hebrew University, they are doing much more theory than I did. But again, there are so many theories and so many branches of theories. that you cannot cope with them anyway.

The question then to be asked is what do you select out of all these theories? Mazar personally do not deal very much with archaeological theory, but his students do and the younger archaeologists in Israel certainly do, again to a certain degree. He explains:

From the new archaeology to postmodern, post-postmodern, it is all known and recognised, ... the new archaeologists are now what we used to call processual archaeology during the 1960s and 1970s and did not make much impact here in this country. Therefore, in Europe, they stop speaking for example about immigration. You do not speak about immigration – a movement of people during the processual period of archaeology. In post-modern archaeology, it became legitimate to speak about immigration as a movement of people and settlement. It was strange for us when we were told that our archaeology was not influenced by these theories and thought processes. There is a lot that one can deduct from these influences as well as the impact of certain people and people who really dictated a line of thought. So, here in Israel we were left beyond this circle of thought and theorising to a large extent. We learned it and knew much about it, but it was not utilised on a wide scale.

Magness (2006:643) refers to the controversy of the Qumran excavation as a case in point. She refers to postmodernism as an approach to the excavation or keeping to the traditional methods and theory. This is particularly important in the case of textual artefacts. She asks:

So who is right? Was Qumran a sectarian settlement or not? The problem is that there is no common ground between scholars on the two sides of this debate. Once Qumran is divorced from the scrolls and from contemporary historical sources such as Flavius Josephus, Philo Judaeus, and Pliny the Elder, the archaeological remains can be interpreted in any number of ways. In a sense, one must pick sides before deciding who is right: "traditional" scholar ship that integrates texts and archaeology or a "post-modern" approach that understands archaeology alone without texts (or with only marginal use of the texts).

We know that during the 1980s archaeology was mainly concerned with a smaller window of investigation that was occupied with a 'single focus' and with 'the politics of location'. However, more recently, and certainly in the last decade, there is an intellectual resurgence of study that concentrates on the "lived experience" and that of "historically situated individuals"; there has been a paradigm shift in theorisation. It encompasses and demands a broader scope of investigation (Meskell 2012:229).

Meskell (2012:231) holds the following:

During the 1980s and the 1990s, many archaeologists deepened their awareness and application of social theory, whereas the 1990s and 2000s were more marked by our recognition of the discipline's socio-political embedding. I would suggest that these developments are inherently linked and that only through an attention to the inequalities of gender, class and race could political inequalities of present archaeological contexts be fully grasped, and our responses incorporated into our work.

Herzog (2019) expresses his views when we spoke about contemporary theorising:

We are still not that much interested in the general theory of society and anthropological and the sociological aspects. Although we do use some of it; not as much as Meskell probably expects of us. We are more down to earth; we want to understand and interpret our objectives, and some scholars do interesting archaeology of things – the archaeology of objects which is also a trend of culture. Therefore, we do have some different directions in this respect, but there is no attempt to develop a new body of theory. We continue on the same path at this stage.

The trend in post-processual archaeology will dictate a much wider interpretation but I am of the opinion that the dominating archaeological investigation in Israel does not require going down this route in the immediate future, unless of course it is applied in independent historical archaeological projects.

For this to happen, excavation and theory must become part and parcel of a broader investigation. In Israel it appears as if this is somewhat neglected as the whole of the region is layered in clearly defined stratigraphy. In other words, there is maybe not yet a need for theory to be part of the excavation methodology in some sites. This is met with much criticism from some archaeology scholars. This is so, even though it is now taught in some courses at university as part of the archaeology curriculum. An independent archaeologist, Gideon Solimani, alluded to this in an interview I held with him. Solimani (2019) argued that there is a definite lack of this.

Taha (2019) considers that the view by Western scholars that there is a lack of theorising in the Near East is based on a European intellectual perception and that the social and political dynamics of the region is not fully taken into consideration. He argues as follows:

Archaeology was introduced to the University of Jordan in 1966. It was introduced as part of the theoretical curriculum in a later stage. The department of antiquities had been established in the 1920s as part of the government department to protect archaeology and this theoretical debate was not in a way visible or remarkable in this region.

That is what Taha (2019) believes and he elaborates:

Archaeology started in this region with an interest in antiquities with looting. We are looting not only on an individual level but by colonial participants. It was an open looting – determined by the law of conquest. It was antiquities who introduced this concept and it was introduced with an establishment of the department of antiquities in Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan. It was fashionable, and it was a department serving



foreign expeditions. And the internal part was limited in way to protection. That was the historical role at the beginning of archaeology in terms of antiquities.

Therefore, he can understand why the interest in theorising archaeology was being delayed significantly in this region, but also in South America and even in America and Mexico. The interest started from looting, in fact, from people who picked a land for looting or from an interest in the specific foreign expedition of archaeology. But later, it has been introduced to universities, for example, archaeology was introduced as a discipline in Palestine in the 1970s; in Israeli universities of course in the 1950s.

During my research, I spent much time in the Old City of Jerusalem in the Muslim Quarter and observed the daily routine of the people as they go about their business. Apart from the plethora of tourists, who are a major source of income for the traders and the more informal sellers of goods in the streets and alleys of the Old City, I could not help to think that this has been a way of life for these people for millennia. I believe that the hill country, and specifically Jerusalem, has always been a tourist attraction. It has seen many occupations, some friendly and some not so friendly. Jerusalem has seen many rulers and has witnessed many sieges and bloody battles in its streets. These have come and have gone. However, what remained, I observed, was the lived experiences of the people from various religions and the traders as they walk the streets of the city. This realisation made me ask questions about the archaeology we practise. There can be no search for history that demarcates land. The time and space continuum is in constant flow against a backdrop of the land and the city that occupies it and it has been doing so for thousands of years. The people come and go, and they will leave their markers and relics behind. A Christian Arab is the curator of an Armenian church on the Via Dolorosa. The guesthouse manager is a Jewish woman married to a Palestinian. Below ground, and no matter how deep, we see the same. Archaeology must not cherry pick from these artefacts in occupation levels within the flow of time and space.

Abu Al-Haj (2001:237) argues as follows in this regard:

The long history of archaeological practice in Palestine/Israel has naturalized the use of the Bible in scientific practice and empirical quest, as intuition, as historical source, and as setting the range of plausible interpretations of empirical data. This scientific epistemology opened up the possibility that the Bible and belief could be articulated with *scientific* objects, with artefacts. Guides at the tunnel [Western Wall Heritage Tunnel my italics] engage in practices that extend that now that now long-standing epistemic culture.

According to Abu Al-Haj (2001:237-238), “[s]cientific objects no longer stand as both empirical evidence and national-cultural icons that are autonomous of the biblical texts upon which their recovery was initially dependant”. Popular media call the search for the Higgs

boson the ‘God particle’. The discourse around the dinner tables around the world sometimes changes to religious discourses and the validation of scientists looking at the cause of the universe in this pure theoretical and empirical observation, done at the CERN facility. Similarly, what seems to be enmeshed with the archaeology of the region and especially in Jerusalem, became a religious discourse.

What comes to mind is the context of material culture. Ian Hodder explains:

In a sense, archaeology is defined by its concerns with context. To be interested in artefacts without any contextual information is antiquarianism and is perhaps found in certain types of art history or the art market. Digging objects up out of their context, as is done by some metal detector users, is the antithesis in relation to which archaeology forms its identity. To reaffirm the importance of context thus includes reaffirming the importance of archaeology as archaeology (Hodder & Hudson 2003:171).

True history is all-encompassing and needs to consider everything. If anything, it must take the present and the context into consideration if it is to survive. Are we seeing a paradigmatic crisis developing in the archaeology of the region? Are the externalities in the archaeology and the history of the region adding up and will it tip the scales in favour of a broader look at the artefactual material, as well as a need for a broader methodological approach than the mere search for evidence? I use the terminology carefully because archaeological expertise in Israel is of the most advanced in the world and its scholars some of the best. What I am postulating and asking at the same time, is: Can the archaeology continue on a path which to a large extent tells one story, or are funded to the extent where the funders expect a certain outcome? Recent events in Jerusalem may point to the fact that more is required than knowledge of historical text, such as the biblical narrative. The excavations in the Old City of David, headed up by Eilat Mazar, are an example of such an anomaly developing and a possible paradigmatic shift. In an interview with Eilat Mazar for National Geographic (Lawler 2019:63), the following manifests:

Her 2005 discovery made headlines around the world, but colleagues remain mostly unconvinced. She relies heavily on pottery for dating, rather than more modern methods such as radiocarbon, and her literal reading of the Bible is seen by many archaeologists as flawed. Even the sign on the catwalk adds a question mark to the identification of the site: ‘The remains of King David’s palace?’ ‘I rely on facts,’ she says, a touch of irritation in her voice when I raise the objections of other academics. ‘What people believe is a different story. It takes time for people to accept what’s new. I can’t wait.’

Ussishkin (2019) is not in agreement with the current situation in Jerusalem. He argues by using Jerusalem as an example:

I think archaeology brings us to some concept, some idea of what we have in the city, in parts, because we can’t dig in the Temple Mount and we don’t know what happens there

... When we take the City of David and the rest of the city, we see a situation that there was hardly anything there until the 8th century, and during the 8th century it was a great city, no doubt, but before then there was some small settlement.

These are the facts and, of course, it leads to biblical problems, but his point is that he is presenting the facts to the biblical scholars. They can do with it whatever they want; it is not his problem.

Ussishkin (2019) goes on: “Everyone agrees that there is no wall from the time of Solomon. Nothing was found. They found some fortifications, especially in the Gihon Spring, and assigned it to Middle Bronze Age. So, they say that the things started in the Middle Bronze Age, but they continued into Solomon’s time”, and he believes that somehow all these fortifications are Iron Age, 8th century and later – there is nothing before. But everybody upholds their view that it is Middle Bronze Age. “Archaeologists went and dug beneath the tower at the Gihon Spring and found artefacts and took samples for a Carbon 14 test, and the Carbon 14 result was the 9th century. But it did not change the view,” Ussishkin explains. Because of the earlier findings that show it used to be Middle Bronze, now they say that maybe they made some repairs in the past, or there was some erosion in the Kidron Valley, and water flow washed the samples away. They say all kinds of silly things. Ussishkin (2019) emphasises that “facts are the basis, maybe some interpretations can be drawn from the facts, but you can’t manipulate them. You cannot manipulate them when you have the facts. And that is a great problem of biblical archaeology today.”

Ussishkin (2019) reminds us of the following:

[The] political situation in this country; it is not so easy and there is a struggle with the Arabs which dominate everything. After 1967 there is a tendency in Israel to move towards Messianic and more ideologically trends. Messianic is maybe the best name. The religion is growing and evolving and associated with the concept that God sits above everything, and he gave us the country etc. They must prove things and of course, all those who want to prove things get sufficient funds to continue the diggings. It is all associated with this view of the redemption of biblical times or the resurrection of the old concepts.

According to Ussishkin (2019),

[There is] in Jerusalem a very fine lady, Eilat Mazar. The people are friendly with her, but she is a fanatic, she took a few stones and called them the palace of King David, but there is no palace and no David there. I am not saying maybe David existed or didn’t exist. Who knows? Maybe he had some house there, but it is not these stones in any case. It should be left as it is.

In stark contrast to the above views of Ussishkin of Eilat Mazar on the excavations at the Old City of David, Ian Hodder (2002:174) expresses the following opinion on how to

approach a site and its unintended consequences, be they political, social, economic or academic:

Is it adequate to focus on the testing of hypotheses set by the academy-an academy always steeped in its own interests and directions? On most if not all archaeological sites there are multiple communities with an interest in the site. They are “stakeholders” such as local inhabitants, tourists, the media, politicians and so on. And there may be different interested communities with conflicting interests. Is it socially and ethically responsible to conduct archaeological research without taking account of the questions they might be interested in asking? The usual response to such concerns is to build a museum or provide an exhibit in an information centre. Local communities then have to accept or comment on what has been done by the archaeologists-their contribution is minimized. A fuller response is to engage the different stakeholder interests in the setting of agendas in the first place.

I, however, recognise that the Israel and Palestinian moratorium on archaeological cooperation, as well as the political conflict in Jerusalem and in general, makes stakeholder engagement before the fact extremely difficult and will in most instances lead to a deadlock and no progression with the excavation of sites where both Israelis and Palestinians are cooperating.

Artefactual evidence, as well as the scientific approach to accessing it, is another aspect that needs attention and is clearly a contentious issue. For example: the IAA does not believe in permitting archaeologists to dig a site based on some artefacts that are dug up and described as typical of an era. In order to check new hypotheses and new phenomena in the stratigraphy will require a much wider scope of work and this is what is clearly called for by some scholars. What is needed is a multi-disciplinary methodology using various other scientific disciplines (Lawler 2019:63), and which I believe will require a more robust theoretical approach. Thomas Kuhn (2012:52) has the following to say about normal science:

In all these respects it fits with great precision the most usual image of scientific work. Yet one standard product of the scientific enterprise is missing. Normal science does not aim at novelties of fact or theory and, when successful, finds none. New and unsuspected phenomena are, however, repeatedly uncovered by scientific research, and radical new theories have again and again been invented by scientists. History even suggests that the scientific enterprise has developed a uniquely powerful technique for producing surprises of this sort. If this characteristic of science is reconciled with what has already been said, then research under a paradigm must be a particularly effective way of inducing paradigm change. That is what fundamental novelties of fact and theory do.

This I believe also applies to the science and theory building in archaeology. Not all scholars and archaeologists of the region believe that the above theory of Kuhn has been applied tenaciously.

Solimani confirms that “[i]t is a very big problem in archaeology – Israel archaeology – that they don’t teach theory.” When he studied for his BA, he never studied anthropology theory

or sociology theory, i.e., about society and how society builds and how society is. “It is not in the curriculum ...” (Solimani 2019).

Critics of the lack of contemporary theorising in the excavations of Jerusalem are met with labels, such as nihilists and being post-modernists (Kletter 2020:168). Kletter further argues that site reports are poor substitutes (which will reflect the objective analysis) for popular impact, but there is a vast difference in the media releases by the archaeological establishment. These are by nature politically orientated. In addition, there are dozens of sites of an Islamic nature that were conveniently removed to get to the Iron Age levels (Kletter 2020:169).

Other excavation methods of contention are the tunnelling under the streets and built-up areas. Many archaeologists view this as ‘unethical’. It is claimed to be not only destructive but also serving to hide the true nature of what is found down there. Such methods are in complete contradiction to the archaeological method to dig down from the top through the various layers and recording what is in each layer. Tunnelling from the side is, according to the critics, nothing more than claiming heritage. Kletter (2020:167) argues that “[t]he main aim of tunnelling is not archaeological: they are political means of penetrating into and controlling the earth underneath Palestinian neighbourhoods”.

What is very problematic for modern-day archaeological theorists is the fact that even though the rules have been followed in some instances by the excavators in East Jerusalem, the destruction of layers of occupation above the Iron Age layers is dominating and compromising the scholarship, and debates about this are rife in the media. Regardless of how subtle it is, the people whom I have interviewed are aware of this.

The methods and theory in applied archaeology need to be robust in its scientific scope. Any deviation from this will be criticised and questions will be raised about the motives of the excavation. As Meskell (2012:232) states: “National modernities are constructed through dialogic relationships between archaeological materiality and heterogeneous narratives of the past. We might question: how has cultural heritage been deployed in quests for specific modernities, sometimes at the expense or erasure of others? How do political agendas inhere in monumentalized space?”

Mazar (2019) challenges with the same logic the roots of early Israelite occupation of the region and contends that the erasure of early Israeli roots by the minimalists are also faulty.

He states:

The scepticism will be that you may say that there were no Israelites here, but no one says it. We see no Israelite kingdoms in the Iron Age II period in the 8th or 9th century. There is the kingdom of northern Israel with Samaria at its head – it is known to us documented not only from the Bible and archaeology but also from Syrian documents and Moabite documents. The kingdom of Judah is also documented in many documents. Thus, it is very clear, and we have inscriptions and names from the 9th, 8th, and 7th centuries. The conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians is well documented archaeologically and historically in written documents.

Some questions arise concerning the earlier periods, for example: When did those Israelites appear on the stage of history? Mazar explains:

During the 1960s and 1970s a lot of surveys were carried out in Samaria; the Judean hills, the central hill country of Israel and revealed a network of sites. There are now more than 500 sites in the central hill country which were dated to the 12th and 11th centuries and identified by many archaeologists as earlier Israelite.

Mazar refers to this period as the Judges Israelites. Then came other scholars, like William Dever, who used the term proto-Israelites. Even Israel Finkelstein used the term proto-Israelites. Mazar explains this concept:

Proto Israelites means villagers, tribes who later appear as Israelites of the monarchy. They make their first appearance in the 12th and 11th centuries, so the question arises: Why not call them Israelites? In the literature you will find those who deny this relationship and those who accept them until today. In this context there are scholars who do not believe in this identity – especially in Europe. The Copenhagen School which are completely nihilistic do not believe in anything. I do not know if the Copenhagen School still exist even today. They are biblical historians – not archaeologists. They refer to archaeology in their arguments, but they are not archaeologists themselves and this makes a big difference.

Notwithstanding the above reference by Mazar to the various theories and the complexities raised for archaeology, I do believe that the criticism raised against some of the methods used, such as tunnelling into space, does not necessarily adhere to the method of archaeology. Questions raised do not necessarily related to technique or theory, but are rather of a political nature, given the very context of the site in Jerusalem and its proximity to sacred sites as well as its metaphysical symbolism in the minds of people across the globe.

It is evident that excavations in Jerusalem are by nature complex and laden with problems and I would surmise that theoretical approaches would hinder the archaeological process, given the time and money constraints it must face. It is also politically sensitive, and this is not from one political view. It is sensitive from both an Israeli and Arab perspective. Claims that proper theoretical methodologies were followed during the early excavations in

Jerusalem can be interrogated. We need to look at the problems that archaeologists may face to satisfy all parties and stakeholders, especially in a city such as Jerusalem with its multiplicity of cultural identities.

Ferdinand Deist (2000:97) argues that anthropological models, as far as studying ancient Israelite culture, can be problematic though. He holds the following belief:

Some of the theories show an idealist and others a materialist bias. Some assign realistic value to their constructed theories, while others see theories as valuable fictions and others take a critical stand. Choosing a theory by definition determines the kind of explanations that will be offered for phenomena and their relationships. Gottwald, for example, chose a materialist theory of culture and a revolutionary theory of cultural change and came up with a picture of early Israelite history that differs widely from the picture that Lemche arrived at through a more inductive and evolutionary approach.

Deist (2000:98) further argues that, by speaking exclusively of Israelite culture and the existence of subcultures as a definite phenomenon of the Levant and the Palestine/Israel region, it cannot thus be argued that the Israelite culture is the only face to show.

The region has manifold religions and cultures and has had so for millennia. To extract cultural information as ethnic markers from non-textual artefacts is extremely difficult. Therefore, in the case of the Israelite United Monarchy period, we will need to see much more than what is currently offered in this regard and being put on the table as evidence.

Abu El-Haj (2001:131) argues:

The theory that shapes the work of archaeology exists on two levels. There is a prior historical story (one based on interpretations and identifications of the artefacts found), reproducing the circular reasoning relied upon by Yadin and Aharoni in their dealings with the evidentiary relationship between texts and facts. It is at that level that the discipline's *Jewish* nationalist commitments are both presupposed and made.

Although the 'conquest theory' is not regarded as valid anymore by any archaeologist, this presupposition, as argued by Abu El-Haj (2001), is still viewed by some Palestinian scholars with some trepidation, as Sarie (2019) argues:

The question of the Israeli conquest in the Iron Age was used as a base for reclamation. Reclamation to have a basis for the modern Israel. It has nothing to do with it, because everybody knows, even Finkelstein knows about the falsification of that conquest. But it has been done and it has been introduced by all these pioneer biblical archaeologists to have the basis for the Israeli reclamation for the new sites. Nobody denied it, even me, that the Jewish was here; yes, they were part of the society and even before the Muslim and the Christian traditions.

Sarie believes that all the changes are about power and statehood:

The Romans was here for 500 years. The Greek was here for 300 years or more, while the Arabs were here for about 100 years. The Crusaders were here for 100 years. Now,

let us go back even further. The Persian was here, the Canaanite even longer. So, each of these empires was here. They have a right to claim. Now, who is going to have claim to the country then?

He elaborates that there were also the Greeks and all of the Christian world, with the Byzantine, with the Roman and he then asks: “So why don’t they claim it? The Ottomans could claim it because they have been here for 500 years. So, the Israeli situation is a reclamation for what?”

The multiplicity of people’s histories of the region is problematic for any argument that archaeology can use to lay claim to a region, which for all practical purposes was occupied and ‘owned’ by many conquerors, empires, colonial powers and mandates.

The spatiality and time frame, as well as the difficulty to determine cultural occupation, for example by the study and dating of pottery or pottery fragments, are difficult.

Solimani (2019) argues as follows in this respect:

You look at the cultural material and what you find and see is a continuation of the local people for hundreds of years. So ... it was not new people that came here, it is the local development of cultures of the people that live here. The Israelites or the Jewish people – they are local people. One of the many important things [people believe] ... in archaeology ... is that you can identify ethnic groups with archaeological finds, but you cannot.

Solimani explains this by saying it is his main argument with Israeli archaeology because, with one look at the finding, you cannot say this is Jewish, Canaanite, or Palestinian. You cannot. If you want to identify the culture or ethnicity, you need the text that will tell you who stayed in this village, in this city; whether it was occupied by Jews and/or Palestinians.

Is there a dichotomy existing in the archaeology of Jerusalem, for example, or in some of the prominent sites where Israelite occupation was being pinned down by determining ethnicity and what the difference is between ‘Old World’ archaeology and ‘New World’ archaeology, and what the theories of the two would entail? I am asking this question because I believe that the archaeology in Israel is to a very large extent still processual and according to the Binford tradition. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, both Binford and Michael Schiffer started investigating the problems within their own theoretical paradigm, which essentially allowed for a disregard of later occupations and this is mainly still the case in Israel today. Watson (2009:7), who writes about the nature of sites and its subsequent excavation approach, maintains: “Archaeologists were ignoring the complexities inherent to prehistoric human/environmental relations. They also gave insufficient attention to cultural



and noncultural agents, events, and processes that rearrange, remove, or obliterate original cultural deposits and their original sedimentary contexts. Binford's and Schiffer's publications impelled an intense focus on site formation and deformation.”

Archaeology during the 18th and 19th century made use of the classification of artefactual characteristics and it became known as typology. This made the dating and interpretation as well as the formulation of data easier. The present-day debate about typology as cultural or ethnicity markers remains a hot topic and “anxiety” (Boozer 2015:95) among archaeologists are still prevalent, as Solimani (2019) attested during our discussion. However, it is nevertheless widely used and remains a useful tool as far as hypothesis testing goes and serves as a common ‘language’ between archaeologists. However, (Boozer 2015:96) cautions: “We will never know how closely our type concepts corresponds to some external reality.” Boozer (2015:96) also states: “There is no absolute right or wrong way to classify anything, but there are better and worse ways of pursuing specific purposes, once we have decided what those purposes are.”

Boozer (2015) is of the opinion that if the abovementioned purpose is to describe a culture that dominated the excavated occupation level, then we cannot default this. After all, when we excavate middens, we know what types of food the past inhabitants consumed; for example, shell middens would reveal that the diet consisted of high protein seafood. However, the typology of pottery finds would be far more difficult to differentiate between Israelite and Canaanite pottery of the Late Bronze or Iron Age. I would argue that in the Near East and in Israel specifically we have evidence of an extremely heterogeneous population over thousands of years who occupied the region. Identification of ceramics then becomes an interpretation of “art rather than a science” as Boozer argues (2015:96). This leads us to the issue of cultural identity and its difficulties as ethnic markers.

Apart from actual textual remains, the claim for occupation during a space or time is by itself difficult and does not take into consideration the multi-cultural mix that inhabits the same space and the same time.

Goa (2019) is of the same view:

Everyone comes with their own ideological background ... the results have always been interpreted according to the digger. That is the tough part, but the earlier part is of course, what exactly is Israelite culture? As far as we know the pottery that they have were all part of the Canaanites. There is practically no difference – there is nothing distinctive that we can say this is Israelite. The oil lamps from the Iron Age to the Late Bronze Age –

there is no difference. So, it is all contextual. But because this area was mountain area, it should not be Canaanite, Canaanites were all in the flat lands. Do you know that for certain? That is a generalisation. So, it is a very subjective science.

According to Abu El-Haj (2001:131),

The earth has to be carved up in particular ways in order for the objects of archaeology to become visible, not simply by transforming absence into presence, but, more specifically, by creating particular angles of vision through which landscapes are remade. *How* one goes about hewing the land tells us something about *what* kinds of objects archaeologists deem to be significant (to be worthy of being observed).

She further elaborates:

[I]t determines which (kinds of) objects come forth from the excavated land. History was made, and a new material culture produced from, the dialectic between the kind of history these digs sought to recover and the practical work of excavating itself. It was an embodied history of Jerusalem that was not simply coterminous with (the quest for) a Jewish national tale (Abu El-Haj 2001:131).

In addition, she says: “The century-long tradition of the wider field of biblical archaeology had already delimited the parameters of inquiry and debate for the study of ancient Jerusalem. It is at the intersection of these two scholarly and national-cultural fields that the work of excavating Jerusalem needs to be situated” (Abu El-Haj 2001:132).

Some interesting facts came to light during an interview in Jerusalem in 2019, nearly a decade after the publication of Abu El-Haj.

Solimani (2019) believes that “[a]rchaeology needs to start with the history of the people that came here and be known through their cultural material”. He states that archaeology will succeed but still need to do much work to be a science. It must have the ability to be a science and to tell the story of the people who lived here through their archaeological material. However, Solimani (2019) contends that “the problem in this country is that the archaeology is built in the 19th century and from a Christian point of view this was obviously the text of either the Bible or Christianity. The Israeli’s add nationalism to it.” He thus thinks that,

... all this nationalism and religion created bias archaeology in Israel. And if you want to have better archaeology you must disconnect this – the true way, the Bible and the nationalism must be disconnected, and then tell the story of this place through the text. If you do that, you have to tell the story of all the people that lived here and in an equal way.

To do this kind of archaeology, he thinks is a very strong political statement.

What is argued for from the above is that all layers of occupation in Jerusalem and elsewhere should be treated with the same aplomb of discovery and that certain layers should not be

treated with more funding or more historical value, as for example the Late Bronze or Iron Ages. It is evident that three decades ago the layers of any modern era were disregarded and not treated with the same historical value, but have subsequently and to a large extent been rectified by the excavators and the authorities, as Baram (2002:12) highlights:

In the late 1980s, Neil Silberman reported the Citadel of David Museum gift shop had a basket of clay tobacco pipes by the cash register. The artefacts, recovered from excavations at the citadel, were treated as tourists' trinkets, available for a few shekels each. They were afterthoughts in a museum dedicated to presenting the glorious history of the city, holy to three faiths, from its origins through the biblical period to the present. Though the objects were recovered in archaeological excavations and had archaeological significance, as Silberman noted from studies by historical archaeologists in North America and Europe, in Israel they were treated as too modern to be archaeological. That example epitomised the lack of concern and interest over Ottoman-period artefacts, which Silberman linked to nationalist ideology.

In contrast to some of the claims that are made against the lack of historical archaeology excavation and funding in current-day Israel, Baram (2002:25) holds that there is an increase in these periods. An interesting observation that is made is that the historical archaeology of the city opens new debates for both Israelis and Palestinians alike and that this is good. As Baram (2002:26) puts it:

The implications of this archaeology are difficult for the peoples of the region. For Israelis, it requires facing the heritage of 1948 when a people were dispossessed while another gained a state – the archaeological evidence creates a visual and tactile set of reminders of a vigorous past of Palestine. For Palestinians, the archaeology is similarly difficult since it provides the physical evidence that the place of their collective memories has turned into archaeological strata.

As far as my research shows, there is, however, not enough of this and as Baram (2002:26) remarks, the link to the multi-ethnicity of the Ottoman period disappears and also how it is portrayed in the citadel museum of the period after the Ottoman period, the rise of Zionism in Europe and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Historical archaeology does not get the attention it deserves. However, the views are varied.

When the point of the state of historical archaeology in Israel was raised during my research, some of the respondents raised some aspects and concerns.

Mazar (2019), told me

There is one exception, and this is Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, you have a lot of archaeology activity which is financed and motivated by one organisation – Elad, which is a very nationalistic right-wing organisation – and they finance large scale excavations in the City of David, but here we must note that, they work in corporation with the Israeli Antiquities Authority and Tel Aviv University and they do a lot of work – archaeological work.

He further states:

Their motivation is the motivation of those who organise it and those who finance these excavations – it is nationalistic in terms of you know improving our rights on Jerusalem. But the archaeologists who are doing the work, are doing very fine archaeological work with no bias at all and their interpretation is quite objective and these others – those who give the money – know it. They recognise it and they don't try to influence the results or the interpretation.

So, for Mazar (2019), this is a very strange situation which he personally does not like, but this is the situation in Jerusalem. He does not see any such religious-based results in the rest of the country.

Solimani (2019) explains it differently. He thinks it goes with one's political point of view and how one practises archaeology; it is how you want to see the life here. Therefore, his main criticism against archaeology in Israel is that "they refuse to admit that their archaeology is a political act or an economic act or a social act or a religious act. They refuse to do it, and by this, they continue to do biased archaeology." Solimani (2019) states that the most archaeology that people do in Israel is, in his words,

... old-fashioned archaeology where they are digging and searching the old period from 2 000, 3 000 years ago, but never research about the last 500 years. While this area had a lot of change from different rules – it was under the Ottoman Empire, and this area changed very much. The colonialism came here by the British, French, Germany and others.

With the rise of the nation, modernism came – all types of transportation and all the media – making it a mechanical mecca with machines and ships. Life changed here very much, also with the end of the Ottoman Empire. He elaborates:

It was here for more than 1 000 years; it was a Muslim Arab area. And then it was all demolished, they kicked out the people, new people came here, and they created a new landscape. All of this happened, and the archaeologists did not want to do the archaeology of these later periods, the historical archaeology. They don't want to do it and they totally ignore it because this is attached to the conflict over the land (Solimani 2019).

Solimani concludes with: "... here they have to shift from doing older archaeology and classic archaeology to the modern archaeology and historical archaeology. This will be very much part of the society, and the argument about every aspect of life, because they will talk about it and how it's happened."

According to Maeir (2019), among most professional archaeologists there is less and less of an urge to be in the front line. He believes in the pre-state and in the first decades of the state, which were right at the forefront. They are doing archaeology as professionals to bolster their claims on whether they are Zionist or Arab, or nationalists. He thinks:

[T]his has affected archaeology very adversely and it is still seen so today, but it is for the most part done by the non-archaeological bodies. For example, at the City of David, archaeology is funded with a very specific agenda or government ministries who fund archaeology because they think Jerusalem is important or this topic of Jewish heritage in Jerusalem is important. And if there is money for conservation, it will almost always go to the so-called Jewish heritage as opposed to a general heritage.

Maeir (2019) believes that, at the top of the food chain, “people who do the work for the IAA in the City of David are for the most part highly competent and very well-trained archaeologists who are not buying into the ideological agenda. They are doing their work and is for the most part not at the forefront.” That said, there is no such thing as objective science in general, and everyone brings their baggage with them. Some try and fight harder to put it in the bag, but the truth is, even if they have left-wing agendas or right-wing agendas, everybody is bringing their agendas. His view on archaeology, though, is on the one hand that he does want to dig for the truth and not dig for nationalist reasons, but on the other hand “archaeology is an extraordinary tool for teaching heritage”, and he does not feel embarrassed in utilising it for teaching Jewish heritage as well. He supports his view by saying:

As long as you don't cancel out and you are inclusive of the other types, and you don't dig only what you are interested in, but anything that comes upon you. There is no reason not to use archaeology to teach about Jewish history, which goes back about 3000 years. The same thing goes for Arabs records, it goes back 1 500, 1 600 years.

He states that people are so afraid because of the enormous baggage of this misuse of it and do not want to touch anything else, but just be there and be the objective scientist. “There is no such thing as objective science ... if you are not out there, sharing your finds, your knowledge, your experience and passion with the public, then why should the public fund you” (Maeir 2019).

The lack of historical archaeology in Israel may have a direct link to economies of scale and is not necessarily only dictated by ideology, as the excavation record of such layers could potentially show. However, the excavated material in some instances carries a description or nomenclature that shows a predilection to ignore provenance and choose a nomenclature that has its origin in a more ideologically suitable space. If one takes the excavation of the Ottoman period in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Israel, the ceramics are referred to as Gazaware. Even though the origin from the Gaza region has not yet been conclusively proven, as Baram (2002:23) points out. He further holds this opinion:

The most significant contribution of the developing inventories is situating Ottoman Palestine within larger processes of change and finding the connections to global processes of change via global goods and commodities. The archaeology, by identifying

artefacts that came from Europe or East Asia, is helping to move the study of the region away from an Israeli/Holy Land exceptionalism. Interpreting the finds is another significant challenge for the archaeology (Baram 2002:23).

In addition to the views held by Baram (2002), a discourse develops, which adds a specific paradigm and mutates into an archaeological methodology; by labelling the artefacts as specific to a culture, it forms the basis for relevancy and thus exclusion. This then becomes problematic for historical archaeology. Abu El-Haj (1998:174) contends that,

... the whole practice of labelling objects “Arab,” “Jewish,” “Christian,” or “Muslim,” of naming a period “Israelite” instead of “Iron Age” or “Herodian” instead of “early Roman” – all names of “cultures” presumed to have a correspondence in particular contemporary groups of citizens, residents, and tourists-points toward the very logic of classification produced and promoted by Israeli archaeology. The persistence of that classification logic may well mark the most profound way in which Israeli archaeology is nationalist to its disciplinary core: the notion that the archaeological record contains the distinct heritage of what are identified as culturally, religiously, or nationally distinguishable modern population groups.

This reference to “labelling” as mentioned above, of course, ties in very much with the Copenhagen School, particularly with Thompson and Lemche, who also view this “ethnic markers” as “accidental”. One of their main critics, William Dever, views this with disdain and observes that, even though the claim by Niels Lemche that the early Canaanites did not know who they were themselves, he [Lemche] knew (Dever 2003:191,192). As we shall see, there are, however, some critics who view the use of pottery assemblages of the Iron Age as ‘ethnic’ markers to be flawed (Solimani 2019).

Given the current socio-economic and geopolitical population landscape of Israel, Jerusalem and the West Bank, such classification by itself must have an impact on the funding of historical archaeology. Unless, of course, it meets the criteria of the popular paradigmatic discourse and, which I would argue, currently favours Israeli archaeology.

It would be interesting to research the corpus of historical excavations that deal with more recent times or the vanished landscapes caused by the War of Independence in 1948, which is referred to by Palestinians as *al-Nakba* (the catastrophe) (Baram 2002:17). The Islamic layers to a large extent are a problematic area for both sides. On the one hand, the Palestinians cannot excavate these abandoned villages or *lost landscapes* and on the other hand, the Israelis cannot excavate there as there will be no funding or any interest.

According to Kolska (2019), “things have slightly shifted, even within the Antiquities Authority – they will no longer bulldoze the Islamic levels to get down to the Iron Age or the Bronze Age. What they might do is dig it up, but not publish it. Partly out of lack of

interest.” Kolska explains that there are experts – people who know Islamic pottery very well, people who know coins, glassware, porcelain, all the historical stuff – who are just not interested in it and they put it aside. But there is a group who is more interested in looking at late Islamic material. People have always looked at early Islamic material. “In fact, one of the guys who is the senior academic at the Israel Antiquities Authority, Gideon Avni, is an expert on Islamic archaeology and he has published a very interesting and good book about Islamic archaeology in Palestine and the transition period from the Byzantine to the Islamic period with the Crusaders and so forth.” Sometimes, it is not that they do not know about it, but because they have never been taught that this is a period of interest. This is because people believe that historical archaeology does not exist here. So, if you do not know that it exists, then why give it any thought. Kolska also believes that people are scared to touch historical archaeology because it has such a political connotation – you come with a whole burden of politics. Her argument would be: “You have to dig it and you have to publish it. You do not have to take a side on a political issue.” She also states that “you can and should have a political interpretation in the end, but to begin with, as an archaeologist, it is your obligation to document everything on that site, from the top layers to the bottom. That is the pitch that we are going with now. To try and show people what historical archaeology is all about” (Kolska 2019).

Thus, from the following point of view, historical archaeology is completely neglected. It does not exist, because it would fly in the face of the nationalistic narrative or ideology, which seems to be the perception of the traditional way of looking at things in archaeology.

“Yes,” Kolska states, “people feel that they will have to take a political stand and they are scared to take a stand. They may take the correct stand in that sense. They may think well, these people fled, and that is the standard narrative. Most people fled” (Kolska 2019). Kolska and Aren Maeir were digging at Tell es-Safi, and then some people started doing historical research in the upper layers. They discovered the following:

[T]here was a small massacre. People were murdered at the site. Bad things happen during a war – everyone knows that, but fundamentally, if they haven’t bothered or taken an interest to look at the Palestinian village and to relate to it, they would never have discovered these graves and that is part of the history of the site” (Kolska 2019).

Kolska and Maeir published a paper eventually, but it was more about the agriculture and land use of the Palestinian village and not the mass graves.

When I commented “you can commit career suicide, academic suicide”, if you would be pursuing historical archaeology, I received a few interesting responses.

Kolska (2019) believes there is pressure involved and that there are a lot of people who politically do not think it was a major trauma and that one should not have sympathy with the Palestinian Nakba because of the expulsion. According to her:

[You have to] see the expulsion in a political sense in that people were expelled from their homes. Yes, many Palestinians opposed the creation of a state, but for good reason. This is their home. And other people came in. It is an age-old conflict. But people have not gone to that point of saying there was suffering, there was expulsion, that was wrong, one must redress that in some way.

Kolska’s argument, and maybe also Solimani’s argument, is that the scholars and the authorities first need to acknowledge the expulsion. They must take responsibility and archaeologists are culpable in this whole thing. She points out and Raz Kletter also discussed it in his book that the archaeologists were called upon to do surveys of sites. She explains:

The expulsion happened in 1948. People fled and were pushed out. Then the villages were abandoned and stood empty. Most of them were not destroyed necessarily unless there were active fighting at that particular village, the ruins stood abandoned. In the early 1950s Ben Gurion decided that to ensure that the people will never come back, they would raze the villages. Secondly, they were an eyesore – it was a reminder of what has happened. They wanted to start with a clean slate and invited the antiquities authority, which is the predecessor of the current authority. The department of antiquities invited archaeologists to come and assess the buildings that were still standing and to decide, which one should be preserved, and which can be demolished? The guy who oversaw that was Shmuel Yeivin, who was the head of the department at the time. They went out to these villages in groups, and Raz has done a lot of research on their diaries and the documentation of those groups.

According to Kolska, Kletter knows a lot more about it than she does, but the fact is that only in the early 1950s these buildings were actively preserved or destroyed. They brought in bulldozers or dynamited buildings. Most of the levelling of the villages, therefore, happened later as a political decision, an active decision by the government. She then further explains:

The land, because most of it became government land, was actively forested by the Jewish national fund. Pine trees, Cyprus trees, have been planted in many of the villages; and they are now parks. Either closed parks or open parks, so people can go and hang out. There is a kind of restructuring of the landscape to efface the fact that there were ever Palestinians living there, that there were ever villages. And that was a conscious decision – a government decision that were legislated. It was not just a random decision. That set the tone for how people perceive what happened here. Because it is effaced, it is gone. There are Palestinian organisations inside Israel, in the Galilee, who are involved in preserving the heritage. They are either people who lived in those villages and were removed and now live in other villages nearby, or they live in the same village or the periphery or wherever. They actively go out and try and preserve things in the villages. Particularly the cemeteries. Some people have grandparents in these cemeteries. They know the graves; they know where their family’s graves are. There is a constant conflict



between them and the Jewish National Fund who officially own and monitor the land. It is an uphill battle because they are scared that these people would start making claims. Luckily, they did not bulldoze the cemeteries.

This destroyed village, as discussed above and which has been occupied for centuries, has been razed and are obliterated from the landscape as we shall see later when I discuss the case of Lifta. The subsequent restructuring of the landscape after a war erases part of the history of the people as well as selective archaeology. In my view, archaeology here enters the realm of super modernity, as postulated by González-Ruibal (2008: 248-249) who asks the following: “How should we as archaeologists translate the recent past? I will describe two ways: storytelling, which is currently the most usual procedure for the mediation of the past in our discipline, and making manifest, a mode of translation which, unlike storytelling, is not based on literary rhetoric.”

According to Christian scholars in Jerusalem, there appears to be a monopoly on archaeology and thus the preservation of the collective memory, as pointed out by Goa (2019). He illustrates with an example:

Interpretation is a subjective thing, and everyone comes with his or her own baggage, and so for sure you are going to find something. A good example is here: outside the Mosque’s gate they discovered the most beautiful mosaic floor with a peacock design, and I think a couple of skeletons with chains. It was an Armenian monastery.

He explains that they do not know exactly which age it was, but it was an Armenian monastery and apparently the monks were doing some form of penance. A couple of decades ago they used to wear chains inside as a form of penance, but the ultra-orthodox immediately said no, it was Jewish and that they were tortured ..., they stopped all the excavations and they wanted to bring these bones to be buried in a Jewish cemetery. They wanted to check everything, as Goa (2019) illustrates:

At Magdala, for example, you cannot dig now without an IAA supervisor. It is always under their authority now. Because they hold very powerful positions in the universities and they teach the next generation and they are indoctrinated, so they come with the same mindset and outsiders and such as us, we who live here, we are also restricted. We cannot do any excavations without them as supervisors.

Sometimes there are scholars from outside,

... from America or Italy who are digging for example in Sepphoris and they will come with less baggage, but as long as you have a supervisor who is from the IAA, he is the one who is going to interpret the findings. So, you are just shackled in this regard. It may not be written but it is expected of you as an employee of the IAA because you are being paid by the government. And if they draw the line then that’s it.

A final remark on this is that historical archaeology is problematic in terms of Middle Eastern textual contents, of which there is a magnitude that covers the history of the last centuries. In consideration of the biblical archaeology debates that continue unabated, Baram (2002:15) contends that “[h]istorical archaeology here is narrowly defined as the last several centuries, correlating to Ottoman rule, in order to prevent continuing to marginalise the recent past as a worthwhile archaeological endeavour.”

Archaeology enters the realm of structuralism and poststructuralism when the interpretation of artefacts and provenance are put down on paper. It becomes texts and to that end it will become part of the institutionalised narrative. It becomes a trope or discourse and eventually ends up in the popular spaces of academia and the broader public. The object, therefore, ceases to exist in its original form of mute reality and is given a new reality by its interpreter and those that come after them. The meaning is transmuted into other meanings and the context changed to fit the antithesis of its original form. Social and cultural norms and realities thus taint it with the existing forms of power, such as reigning political ideologies and narratives. The previously mute object becomes part of a bigger weapon to wield against protractors who may be challenging the status quo or socio-political and geopolitical agendas and projects.

My research shows that the archaeologist as a scientist may, in some instance, inadvertently feed the specific narrative, and this mutates into ideological narratives, which becomes a common feature in the media. The outcome of such debates becomes the reality. I believe that my questions and topics raised some issues on the reflexivity of scholarship and research, as well as the surveying and interpretation of the material data. However, Hodder (2012:11) points out that we see an increase in reflexivity among archaeologists:

There is thus emerging evidence of archaeologists contributing to wider debates, not just borrowing. These contributions involve archaeologists speaking to their own right, not as anthropologists or historians. Perhaps adding to this maturity and confidence is a new phase of reflexivity and critique as archaeological theorists try to respond to the challenges of working within a global and plural environment.

Such introspection and challenging of one’s own biases will prevent that these realities become the popular theme in many politically motivated agendas, which in a way will become the antithesis of theoretical systems and knowledge.

Cultural determinism and ethnic claims are either rejected or accepted, based upon those who wield the power to do so. All of this is derived from the artefact. Foucault’s claim is

that the ‘artefact’ is the discourse that enables the writing of history. Foucault (2002:10) argues that, consequently, we see the disappearance of a total history to be replaced by a general history which does not consider all the phenomena: “The project of a total history is one that seeks to reconstitute the overall form of civilisation, the principle – material or spiritual – of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion – what is called metaphorically the ‘face’ of a period” (Foucault 2002:10).

We see here a similarity in traditional archaeology and the influence of institutionalised power structures that similarly control the narrative, and thus subjectivity in interpretation is prevalent in most cases. The artefacts’ characteristics and provenance act as a stimulus for interpretation and any subsequent discourse to its meaning. Unfortunately, it therefore only has a true reality while it is in situ and not observed and while it was wielded by its original creator in the past. Archaeology in ‘hotbeds’ of geopolitical tensions, such as the Near East, may lead to the situation where archaeological excavations once excavated has no chance of a revisit, only a reinterpretation of the accumulated data. The irony in many cases is that the archaeology of the region was to a large extent determined by religious ideology from American and European countries and not the Arab nations and to this day excavations largely continue with these Western institutions. It remains an issue with Palestinian authorities and scholars and is viewed with suspicion.

In modern-day Israel, we see that the abandoned Palestinian/Arab villages dotting the landscape are stark reminders of an era of strife and tribulation. It is an indelible part of the history of the land and archaeology cannot turn a blind eye to this, as González-Ruibal (2008:252) argues:

[T]he archaeology of the contemporary past can provide alternative stories about recent events, but it can also — and it must — mediate the recent past in ways that make presence manifest and keep memory alive. This implies exploring other ways of engaging with the materiality of the contemporary world and working in the grey zone between revelation and concealment.

To this end then the complete history, politics and machinations of foreign powers that were and are part of the region must be accounted for in the historical writing of the region. Archaeology needs to be part of this as it is indeed the probe and scalpel of history and is used to dig into the physical and the metaphysical past of the landscape and its people. What is revealed has direct consequences on the present and the future.

González-Ruibal (2008:256) states: “The production of destruction, with its effects on the collectives of humans and things, is especially obvious in times of war and political revolution.” González-Ruibal (2008:256) further contends:

Heritage that is not positively used in the construction of collective identity has been variously defined as negative. Sites that can be described as such are not all necessarily places of abjection: only those sites whose existence has been erased from collective memory, about which nobody is allowed or wants to speak or whose existence is denied. Places of abjection are sites where no memorial is built, and no commemorative plaque is to be found. If super modern anthropology deals with non-places, archaeology must deal with landscapes of death and oblivion: a no man’s land too recent, conflicting, and repulsive to be shaped as collective memory. This is the natural space for archaeology of super modernity’s destructiveness. Nevertheless, some places of abjection may become important locales for collective recollection. Thus, if a place of abjection is a locale beyond social remembrance, where memory is erased, condemned to oblivion. or put in quarantine, menotropin are the material foundations of collective memory. They are not necessarily different, typologically speaking, from places of abjection. It is the way particular locales have been constituted in relation to a group’s identity that grants them a particular status. However, they include new categories too: monuments, memorials, historical buildings, and places where something socially significant happened, something that left a collective memory trace.

I would argue that such a place with a “negative heritage” (Meskell 2002:558) can be the Jewish Quarter in the Old City, which was built over the past historical occupation levels of the Arab population who lived there and who had to make way for the new development. The excavations at Silwan in East Jerusalem may also qualify.

The restructuring of the landscape around Jerusalem (see also the reference to the village ruins of Lifta) may fall into the category of removing the last vestiges of the negative consequence of the war, and the historical memory becomes a question of collective memory. Assmann (2011:23) explains it as follows:

[A] person’s memory forms itself through his or her participation in communicative processes. It is a function of their involvement in a variety of social groups-ranging from family through religion and nation. Memory lives and survives through communication, and if this is broken off, or if the referential frames of the communicated reality disappear or change, then the consequence is forgetting.

Hamdan Taha (2019) holds the following view in reconstructing the development and origin of Near Eastern archaeology:

There are a series of institutions, or schools in Jerusalem linked with colonial powers. There was the French ... 1891 there was a Dutch version, the Swedish were already established by the end of the 19th century. And that is part of the history. It was never a social phenomenon – archaeology – it was a foreign intellectual phenomenon. In Egypt probably a bit earlier, it has been most domesticated as part of the interest of the first generation of archaeologists started in Europe and America – and then there was a new generation of archaeologists.

According to Taha (2019), it took them some time to establish their own views or strategies towards the past. Therefore, it was somewhat with the rise of national states; it was part of the ideology, the national ideology. To justify the archaeology, it was part of the path and discourse of who was ruling in Iraq and Syria. He believes that in other countries it has been all the same story and in this area in Palestine before 1948, before the establishment of Israel; archaeology or antiquities studies have been designed by the British colonial policy. Taha (2019) explains:

The department of antiquities of Palestine was established 1918/1919, formally 1920, and existed till 1948, and the Jordanian antiquities department was established in 1923. Thus, it was part of a policy to also design a political history of two future entities. And following 1948, the establishment of Israel was a new situation, a completely new situation, in the West Bank. It was annexed to Jordan and, therefore, it was under the Jordanian department of antiquities. Gaza was part of the Egyptian administration. By this time inside the green line was new Israel, and so it was completely associated with a political history in the last century.

A presupposition on these, when doing archaeology, leads to a disregard of all other information. If a theoretical approach has not been followed, archaeology will create a bubble within which it can operate and may be difficult to break away from. This is not to say that it has not happened that local archaeologists in the region have done so and have broken away. Israel Finkelstein, Raz Kletter, Neil Silberman and Rafi Greenberg are cases in point and have argued for a balanced interpretation, as well as upending the archaeological and historical ‘applecart’. It is also verified by Palestinian scholars, as Taha (2019) highlights:

Ze’ev Herzog has his own critical views in a way. Israel Finkelstein as well. They have their own school of thinking. There are also some others, with influential voices against the radical, mainstream, of the establishment, the government, the political entities as represented by the Israeli official institutions and antiquities authority, and of some universities. But there are again also some very political views and some people who decide not to be political ... there is Kletter, he is representing great value in this debate. Probably outside of the political agenda in order to understand the truth.

In my opinion, Herzog (2019) corroborates Taha’s views and indeed we see that there is a growing movement in the archaeology to incorporate multi-disciplinary approaches and less focus on the traditional monumental archaeology. He states:

There is a new concept, a new set of concepts based on data which obviously have to change the view, which was in a way quite romantic to the archaeology as one which will prove our presence here, our history, our biblical history, and now we are more aware of the difficulties and discrepancies, and to the actual data, so it is less romantic or part of the romanticism of the original mainstream archaeology and Western perceptions.

However, according to Herzog (2019),

... they went a little bit too far with this 'post-processual archaeology', but there is now a new revolution. Finkelstein is leading in a way the next generation of this revolution, which is the scientific, physical, biological and the genetics aspects that is part of it. All this is new and in the process of developing. This generation will obviously change much of our understanding. It will pinpoint the chronology. So, it will be even more accurate and based scientifically. It is in my view the next phase, or revolution.

There is acceptance of a new type of multi-disciplinary scholarship which spells good for archaeology and the discipline. However, there remains the issue of financial investment in the digs. Archaeologists, to a large extent, remain at the mercy of institutions and funders who may have other goals or objectives with the excavation of sites.

Kolska (2019) raises the following point:

Yes, it is really important that there is a new direction, but the funding has been channelled in a particular direction and that directs them to keep this perception of what is important. You know Jerusalem is important – so there is specific funding just for Jerusalem. Massive excavations going on all year round, just in Jerusalem. And a lot of it is funded privately by these extra-governmental organisations, but they are supported by a government ideologically.

For example, when you want to go and dig at a Palestinian village, you can never find funding in Israel. You must go outside the country, which people have done so far. You do not know if you will get funded, but people are trying anyway. If you publish an article in the newspaper and say, this is an important site of 1948, look what these people have left behind, what happened, the destruction of a culture, you'll be creating a whole new narrative and might be lynched. But that does not happen now. Kolska (2019) emphasises the following: "If however, people are publishing – they've found this amazing scarab from the site or this cylinder seal with Hezekiah's name on it. And the newspapers are fed material by universities and by its departments. The media choose what they want to highlight, and the universities also don't want to be too contentious." Kolska also comments on the debate with Finkelstein over the rise of Israel – did it exist? Did King David exist? "He was hounded by some people who considered him a real pariah, both within the archaeological community and outside – he was seen as an unbeliever who was trying to disprove something. It did not affect his funding, because he was already at a particular status level in the field and position in his career. He also wrote his first book with Neil Silberman. Neil was one of the first people who were writing about colonisation, the fact that they were ignoring these late periods, and this was ground-breaking but contentious at the time."

The last observation on this is that it is clear from the discussions that the archaeological discourse is moving towards an inevitable paradigmatic shift. Whether it will manifest in

changes in site and stratigraphic selection or Palestinian-Israeli partnerships in historical archaeology remains to be seen.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4.1 A view from the West Bank: What happened and why?

The archaeology of the Near East, as well as the area originally known as Palestine, has since its beginnings in the 19th century been skewed towards westernised views and scholarship. In 1933, William Albright recommended the study of the archaeology of the region in an article published by the American School of Oriental Research (Albright 1933:12). He points out the various ways for potential students of going about this fascinating discipline and how to become involved in the history of both the region and the biblical history. He explains as follows:

The importance of Palestinian archaeology is manifold. Palestine lies in the geographical center of the fertile crescent of the Near East, where our western civilization began and where it completed half its history. It forms the connecting link between the cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Canaanites and Amorites, Egyptians and Babylonians, Philistines, Hittites, and Horites all occupied the land, either as settlers or as conquerors, and its culture was formed from theirs. For one who is interested in ancient history and archaeology, Palestine offers unique opportunities. In spite of the relative absence of great palaces, temples, and tombs, such as are found in Egypt and Babylonia, Palestinian archaeology is never monotonous, since one is always confronted with discoveries which link the excavators with surrounding countries. But Palestine offers an even greater interest to the student of its antiquity. Palestine is the home of the Bible, the Holy Land of Jews, and Christians. In Palestine, the archaeologist is never far from the Bible, and he is usually busy with the discovery and interpretation of material which bears directly on Biblical history. The solution of many vexed problems of Israel's history, of the later development of Judaism, and of the beginnings of Christianity must be sought in the buried sites of Palestine (Albright 1933:12).

Any reference to modern Arab or Muslim history or religion is glaringly left out of this description and motivation for the study of this region. One could surmise that there was a reason for the lack of reference to the Arab history, given the need for volunteers who were probably all of the Christian and Jewish faiths. The focus of excavations of the region was sponsored by institutions of Judaism and Christianity, as well as non-religious institutions, such as the American School of Oriental Research. It appears that the omission of Arab heritage in Palestine was not the focus at all and that the source of this romance of the West with the Near East has always been the source of the Bible and Zionism. Albright (1933:14-15) explained the objectives of ASOR as follows:

The American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem was founded in 1900. In 1921 it was incorporated under its present name; a School in Baghdad being added to the School in Jerusalem. The latter has now become the focus of American and Canadian interest in Palestinian archaeology and Biblical history. Its more than fifty supporting institutions represent every shade of interest, from the great independent universities to small theological seminaries. In the organization are representatives of every important



religious group, Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic. The Protestant seminaries are of every denomination, and represent all points of view, from the strictest conservative one to the most liberal. All are united by their interest in the historical background of the Bible.

Although there have been many new schools of thought, as well as a better understanding and a more critical way of looking at biblical archaeology, the exclusion of Arab/Palestinian history and the domination of Jewish and Christianity history is still evident today. This situation was, of course, exacerbated by the war in 1948.

The *Nakbeh* left many abandoned villages on the outskirts of Jerusalem, previously occupied by Palestinians. As mentioned by some of my interviewees, there was an enormous impact on the people as well as the social fabric of the people who had to leave these villages. This may be underestimated by some in modern-day Israel. It has also had a massive impact on the archaeology of the area, especially on the Crusader, Ottoman, and Muslim histories and occupation levels. Solimani (2019) points out:

Most of the Palestinian sites are part of and built on ancient sites. So, the Israeli archaeologists remove the layer of the Palestinian remains of the last few hundred years to go down to what they are interested in and in many aspects, they do not care while they excavate. They do not really give much importance to these remains if they do publications or research. These are totally ignored. It is neglected and can be seen as a political act.

The main protagonists in the destruction of the monuments were the Israeli military, as it appears, and despite some criticism against Yeivin, who was responsible for the surveying of the villages, it can be argued that if it were not for him, more damage and destruction would have occurred and the situation would have been far worse. As Rapoport (2008:87) point out: “The levelling of the villages began as soon as the fighting ended. During his visit to the North, Yeivin saw the army blowing up villages near Tiberias and Mount Tabor. He asked that before villages were demolished, consultations be held with representatives of the Department of Antiquities, because in many villages, ancient building stones are embedded in the houses.” At Zir’in (now Kibbutz Yisrael) a Crusader tower was blown up, and the fortress at Um Khaled, near Netanya, was reduced to rubble. But there were successes too. An order was issued to raze the fortress at Shfaram, but Antiquities Department staff arrived at the last minute and blocked the demolition. At al-Muzayra, a village south of Rosh Ha’ayin, a miracle occurred: The army used a handsome building of pillars in the middle of the abandoned village for target practice, apparently without knowing it was “the only mausoleum that survived in our country from the Roman period”, according to Yeivin. When, nonetheless, the decision came to blow up the mausoleum in July 1949, an antiquities inspector arrived at the site and prevented the blast. The site is now known as Hirbat Manor

(the Manor Ruin) and is recommended in all sightseeing guides for the area. Kletter (2020) relates that in February 1950, at the initiative of Yeivin and others who grasped that without government intervention the country's urban past would simply disappear, Ben Gurion agreed to establish a government committee "for sacred and historic sites and monuments".

The geographical demarcation of the new settlements for the Palestinian population, as well as the selection of which areas to include in the new state, required some skilful geopolitical manoeuvring. Therefore, it is also necessary to look at how the geography, archaeology and religion of the region are combined in the exercise of the geographical demarcation of the land. This was influenced by the national conflict between the Israeli authorities and the Palestinians and remains so to this day. The geographer is inadvertently faced with this dilemma and it affected archaeology. The effect of this would be that any land not demarcated to the ethnic Arabs would be off-limits in terms of archaeological excavation. Geographic demarcation was selective and politicised.

Newman (2008:2) makes the following observation:

To be a geographer, one needed to know their way around Israel, its locations and sites, the minutiae of local change, place names, and Biblical associations. The development of a wider comparative and conceptual frame for the study of Israeli geography only really emerged from the 1980s onwards. There have been only a handful of Arab geographers or planners within Israel's academic community. This probably reflects the fact that the study of spatial and territorial change is perceived as an inherently political topic, which reflects the nature of past, present, and future control of land by the hegemonic power of the State in its conflict with the ethnic Arab minority.

In addition to the application of the geography science, there is a continuation of this conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian woven into the school and university geographic studies curricula. Newman (2008:4) explains:

Within a country such as Israel, where the national conflict remains the central issue on the national agenda, each of these curricula subjects - at both high school and university - have taken on a direct political and emotive application. Jews and Arabs compete over historical facts. Each uses the evidence of history and archaeology as a means of demonstrating their own exclusive attachment to this small piece of real estate between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, while geography (and by association the practice of town and regional planning) has become a means through which each of the two competing national groups attempt to exercise and strengthen their control over the contested territory. The political dimension of geography is not limited to the ways in which territories are zoned and demarcated, usually in favour of the group whose power relations enables it to make decisions and implement them on the ground. It also refers to the way in which spaces and places become part of the national identity formation through socialization, education, and symbolisation.

The unfortunate outcome of this hybridisation of geography and socialisation has had some tragic consequences, and I believe it has an effect on both the Israelis and the Palestinians

in equal measure. But as we shall see, the impact of this has been felt by the Palestinians first, and I believe it has largely contributed to the deadlock experienced and in reaching a peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

The outcome of this conflict is that the deserted Arab villages, once the living area of the inhabitants of the land since time immemorial, are now just shadows of the past. It does not fit the current historical and ideological paradigm of Israel and must now function as a diorama of a forgotten and distant past. Kletter and Solimani (2016:192) write:

Once the deserted Arab villages did not resemble villages anymore, a new metamorphosis began. The destruction annulled the contours of life – houses, streets and alleys, signs, and inscriptions. Once destroyed, a village could be seen as a romantic landscape: picturesque, ruins dotted by terraces, olive trees and sabres (Hebrew slang for prickly pear cacti, used in the 1930s–1960s for denoting “indigenous” Israelis, that is, those born in Israel. However, the plant is a late arrival from America; it grows in many sites of deserted villages; and is also a Palestinian symbol, especially of rootedness). The ruins could be appropriated as an “ancient biblical landscape”, preferably in the frame of national gardens or natural reserves. Perhaps the clearest, but certainly not the only, example is the Sataf natural reserve in the Jerusalem Mountains. The remains of a deserted Arab village were transformed into a garden of “traditional mountain agriculture”. The site does not take the visitor back in time to the Arab village and its culture, but leaps thousands of years backwards. The visitor may see the remains as tangible remains of the “biblical past”.

I have mentioned the role that geography plays in the establishment of national identity. It is noted that very little has changed in the school curriculum for decades, except that there is a much bigger emphasis on the “localism” and knowing the land of Israel (Bar-Gal et al. 2008:50, 60) and the inclusion of some negative external geographies dealing with famine, developed countries versus underdeveloped countries, and third-world countries. The questions raised are explained by Bar-Gal et al. (2008:60):

What is the significance of these declarations from the viewpoint of teachers and pupils? To what extent are they aware of the hidden ideological facts in the program that have influenced the emphasis laid on social and economic gaps or the utilization of resources? Why are no other positions presented in the program for spatial analysis? What is the significance of stressing national values in the subjects being taught and their relative portion in the school geography study program as a whole? What is the political and ideological significance in using the concept “Judea and Samaria” or the alternative concept “the West Bank” in the geography study program? These are some of the questions that arise in connection with the correspondence of the moral rationale of the program to the subjects that appear in it. These questions express what the educational researchers call null curriculum or hidden curriculum.

The use of geographical terminology such as “spatial changes” in the curriculum (Bar-Gal et al. 2008:59) becomes problematic for the teacher and the pupil and, when used without the context, even more so. Ideology remains hidden and perhaps also the role that archaeology plays in this curriculum.

Archaeology, nationalism and geography transect, and in this respect, I would argue that the Palestinians have lost access to huge tracts of land and thus also the possible excavation of their historical roots, because the land that was occupied before 1948 had to be vacated. I have established that this has put Palestinian archaeology in a precarious position not only as far having access to excavations but indeed it has isolated Palestinian scholars in mixing freely and without fear or favour to engage with Israeli scholars. The same would go for Israeli scholars to engage with their Palestinian counterparts, which leads us to the next discussion.

As far as Mazar (2019) is concerned, there is very little activity in Palestinian archaeology and the reasons could well be the ongoing conflict in the Gaza strip, as well as lack of funding in these current times of economic depression. He holds the following opinion:

There is archaeological activity in the West Bank, but the Gaza strip is very limited. In the Gaza strip there is almost nothing. They (Palestinians) destroy huge sites, build on them and there is no inspection or survey done before construction takes place. In the West Bank there are archaeologists, but it is mostly archaeological salvage work. The Palestinian Antiquities Authority have almost 400 archaeologists where 70 archaeologists with PhD's is working for just surveying and site inspection and salvage excavation. The people in the West Bank are also very poor and education is costly and out of reach for most of them. There is a department of archaeology there, but it is not very active, and I do not see publications coming from them. We have a Palestinian University in Eastern Jerusalem Al Quds they have a few archaeologists whom I know – but very few.

When I met with Gideon Solimani, I asked him whether there is any cooperation between the Israelis and the Palestinians as far as archaeology is concerned. There was an emphatic “no” from him. He states: “No, not at all, not at the universities. It is a political statement that they do not want to work with Israeli archaeologists. Even if the Israeli would want to work with them, they do not want to. It is a personal matter.” However, he explains that he is involved in a project with Liora Kolska and others in archaeology from the Hebrew University. They started to dig in a Palestinian village that was destroyed and demolished in 1948 (Solimani 2019) and that hopefully this work will continue.

Another view on the situation held by Kolska (2019) is as follows: “Part of the problem of most of the Palestinian archaeologists who work in the West Bank is that they don't have much in the way of sites, except for some destroyed villages of 1948. But nobody is actively interested, except for Palestinians who live abroad. So, there can't be projects together.” She proclaims that Issa Sarie will never dig with her in Israel. It is not just a question of permits; some of the students come from East Jerusalem, they have permits and Israeli ID cards to be inside Jerusalem, but you will be perceived as a traitor if you work with the Israeli

archaeologists. So, the situation is not good. Similarly, the Jordanians also do not want to work with them. However, Kolska hopes and thinks that it will change; it is just a question of lobbying and pushing the issue and not to be hasty. It will take time.

Kolska (2019) believes Raz Kletter is exceptionally outspoken. In fact, at times, a little over the top. According to Kolska, “there is a point where it becomes propaganda, and you must get your message across and if you are too emotional it doesn’t work. People switch off and you scream and shout, but they are not listening. You must do it in a more logical, quieter way. You need a strategy.” Kletter and Kolska have a project that they started last year, excavating a Palestinian village which dates from 1948. But this is an exception and essentially, in Israel, historical archaeology does not exist as a field.

Kolska (2019) further explains:

Palestinians do not work on the Palestinian period. They do not work on the period after 1948. They do not work on the British mandate period. They work on early Islamic material or the Bronze Age. Sarie has been digging in Jericho, but she thinks he has stopped now; he was working on Bronze Age Jericho. He also did not deal with that. The one guy who tried many years ago was an American researcher called Albert Glock. He was killed, but nobody knows the full story. He was teaching students, in the West Bank and Ramallah, and he and his students worked on a Palestinian village project, but it never really got published and then he died. Since then, there was no major project.

Geopolitics is a major stumbling block for collaboration in archaeological fieldwork. Maeir (2019) explains: “Palestinian archaeology for various reasons is still lagging. You can blame it because of the occupation, and you can blame it because of various issues of culture and scientific modernity which is viewed with negativity that you have in some Arab countries. But the archaeology of the Palestinians is lagging behind.” Unfortunately, as reported by Maeir, the Palestinians will use this as an excuse; he hasn’t seen a single top-notch Palestinian archaeological project conducted anywhere in the region, and it might be partly the fault of the occupation, but he argues that it cannot be used as an excuse. If you want to practise good archaeology, you can find yourself partners, you can be out there and do something, but it is not happening. He explains that he has tried numerous times to develop a research collaboration with Palestinian archaeologists on various topics, but he has been turned down flatly. According to him, “they relate to research collaboration as a collaboration on the negative side. In the past, there have been several attempts, unsuccessful ones, for Palestinian archaeologists who teamed up with European archaeologists. They were open to extensive funding, but nothing substantial came out of it.” He believes that if Palestinian archaeologists went to the European Union and said that they wanted to do

something relating to heritage, peace development or such a type of project, they will get the money. But money is not the problem; the problem is that the opportunities out there have not been utilised. Maeir (2019) clarifies:

Top-notch cutting-edge archaeology in the Middle East is only done either by one person or by a close partnership of people from abroad; yet it remains that they can really do great things, but it doesn't happen. At some point, you cannot blame the world, or you cannot blame Israel, you must take responsibility for what you do. They could be doing great work if they want to. They could be doing the most theoretically interesting material. They could be doing the most analytically or advanced things if possible.

He concludes by saying that from his experience, and he knows it is the experience of several other colleagues of his, that they have “attempted to launch a collaboration with archaeologists working in the Palestinian Authority and for the most part, they just don't want to hear about it”.

The Albright Institute in Jerusalem can be a place where archaeologists from both Israel and the West Bank can meet and discuss scholarly work but, subsequently, it has become more problematic, and it also influences sharing ideas beyond the borders of Israel, as Maeir (2019) explains:

The Albright Institute is an excellent playing field where those things can happen because you meet the people and very often have lectures at the Albright – in the same room you will have archaeologists from the Israeli universities and Palestinian universities, but every time if we ask them whether they would like to join on a project, it was either totally ignored or they would say no thank you. Because in Palestinian society, very often any sort of collaboration – even when it is a positive collaboration, it is seen as collaboration in a negative sense.

Maeir (2019) makes an interesting point:

In Egypt the most virulently anti-Israel lobby and the most virulent lobby against the peace process, are the intelligentsia, which as opposed to most Western countries it is usually the intelligentsia that leads the left-wing leaning approaches to research. Here it is very often not the case. For example – When I have gone to Egypt, most of my colleagues in Egypt would not want to meet me. And there has been a case where there was a large Egyptological Conference in Egypt, and a professor from the Hebrew University went there, and she was basically kicked out.

Palestinian archaeologists are therefore very reluctant to overstep this tacit moratorium but, as far as Maeir (2019) is concerned, the pressure comes from the anti-Israel lobby groups.

The reaction from a lot of Arab countries and Arab populists regarding Israel over the years has been that Israel is the enemy, and the way we deal with them, is to boycott them. Just last week I received a letter that there was a symposium of Arab intellectuals in London who were calling that it is time to stop the boycott on Israel however it is rather late to call for this now is it not?

Non-cooperation between Palestinian, Israeli, and Christian archaeology was not the norm in the past and we see that there used to be a multi-cultural collaboration between scholars. Taha (2019) explains:

In Palestine a multi-cultural department was established where Palestinian Jews, Muslims and Christians were working together till 1948. In 1948, after the partition resolution of Palestine, when it was a point of debate among those who became Israeli, there were prominent figures asking to keep a unified department for the Palestinian state and the Israeli state against the proposed partition. They argued that the history of the land cannot be divided and that they were in the minority, the nationalists were stronger, and they decided to establish an Israeli department of antiquities.

There were scholars working together in the same department. There were Palestinians and Palestinian Jews, Palestinian Muslims, as well as Christians and this is what Taha remembers and understands. They were working together because they are all former Palestinians. Taha explains it as follows:

Unfortunately, the Palestinian department of antiquities ceased to exist, and it has been replaced by an Israeli department of antiquities inside what is known as the Green Line. And, in Jordan there was a department of antiquities, based in Aman, and the West Bank was annexed to Jordan, so it was under the umbrella of the Jordanian department of antiquities. That was part of the history.

This unity no more exists and there is a new department, and they work with a new political mandate, the narrative serving the political denomination. This is exactly what happened in the years following 1948. Taha elaborates:

The first great task given to the new Israeli army during that time was to demolish Palestinian cities and villages. For fifteen years, there was a systematic operation for the demolishing of Palestinian towns and villages which was being depopulated. Palestinians were dismissed, displaced from their own towns. This was done because these villages were a symbol and a reminder of the partition and would have been seen as a physical symbol of a former life and time, therefore, it was important to demolish it to create a new landscape fitting the ideology. This process continued till 1967 where we see various changes in the activity of the Zionist situation. Now instead of demolishing it, they just claimed it. An example from the Hebrew heritage committee, is of a group of settlers inserting something on one of the arches; they took a key stone on the top of the arch and inserted a new stone with a new Menorah. And it is documented fully. It shows how things are going down sometimes.

Israel relies heavily on tourism. From my own experience with organised touring companies, as well as observing the multitudes visiting the holy sites in Jerusalem and Caesarea, I believe that the archaeology of an abandoned Arab village would hold very little interest for tourists, religious pilgrims and Jewish people living abroad who would want to visit the Holy Land and visit the origin of their faith. The motivating factor here being the romance of the holy sites and the archaeological sites that have links to it. I would think the arguments for excavating an Arab village would then be less so, as Solimani (2019) points out: “So far as

this is concerned, the Israeli is still very much in need of this romantic idea, about finding the roots, the history and the archaeology of these sites. Thus, there is still the heritage issue in Israeli society.” Solimani (2019) explains:

[There are] two directions of thought. One direction is very local, very civilian, very secular. They do not need to adhere to the roots so much, they want to be a state like any other state. The other side leans very much towards needing this proof.” Because of the new immigrants and the conflict and the deep influence of religion, and which is on the increase, they want to have the proof of their history and its connection to the faith. They want to go to the city of David. They want to go where all the places of the Bible have happened. So, it is also very much like Christian tourism, they want to come here and follow the places of Jesus. It does not matter if it exists or not, they want to come and see for themselves.

So, Israeli archaeologists who are interested in historical archaeological sites that fall outside of the scope of mainstream biblical archaeology need to work in isolation and with very little funding or support from the authorities and the Palestinian authorities. Fortunately, there is a growing interest in historical archaeology, despite what some may claim it seems, as Kletter and Solimani (2016:192-194) state: “In recent years, the antiquity of the deserted Arab villages is being re-discovered. There are two main reasons for this process. The first relates to a change concerning ‘late’ periods. There is a growing tendency to acknowledge these periods as legitimate for study and preservation. ‘Historical archaeology’, dedicated to (roughly) the last 500 years.” A second reason relates to the destruction of the villages:

The destruction emptied the villages of distinctive Palestinian elements. To the present Israeli generation, far-removed from 1948, the ruins no longer so clearly symbolize the enemy. Memories have blurred and those who remember are mostly no longer with us. Younger generations do not carry in mind the imprint of the villages before or immediately after 1948. Gone are the smells and sounds of a concrete, traumatic past. When young supervisors meet the remains, they treat them as neutral archaeological sites, not as deserted Palestinian villages. There is, of course, a monetary aspect (money from salvage excavations flow to the pockets of the excavating bodies), but it is not the major issue. The destruction (for which one had to imagine that the Arab villages are not ancient) enables us now to see them as ancient (Solimani, 2016:192-194).

But there is a controversy that surrounds this as is the case with the abandoned village of Lifta. Lifta is an abandoned Arab Palestinian village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was last occupied by its inhabitants before the 1948 war. This historically rich archaeological site was occupied by the Crusaders, the Ottomans and the Arabs, and is recognised by both Palestinian and Israeli archaeologists as incredibly important. The investigation also reveals that some of the walls date to biblical times. The IAA was tasked to do an assessment survey on the site, and they revealed that the site should become a heritage site. This UNESCO world heritage site has been ranked by the World Monuments Fund as one of the most endangered heritage sites in the world, yet the location is earmarked for the development of



ultra-luxury villas. At the head of this project is the Israel Land Authority who is responsible for the management of land in Israel. When archaeologists investigated why no movement towards the establishment of the heritage site is happening, the IAA responded that only the ILA can discuss the future of Lifta. Now both Jews and Arabs are working together as a coalition to save Lifta and to preserve it as a historical site. For the Arabs, as one of the coalition members argues, Lifta represents their history, their memory and their rights. Subsequently, a copy of the IAA report has been obtained and it clearly recommends that the site should be retained as a heritage space and should be protected from any new land developments in its proximity. As an archaeological site, Lifta is unique in that it represents the occupation levels of many different periods in the history of the region.

However, what is disconcerting is that after a long period of silence on the part of the IAA, a statement was finally released, which reveals that the development will go forward with residential housing, a shopping mall and a hotel and that Lifta will be treated as a sensitive historical site. Yet no one at the IAA is willing to discuss Lifta with any of the archaeologists or the coalition members to save Lifta (i24News 2018).

Although the site will now be excavated by the IAA, it will be a rescue excavation. The development of a modern suburb will remove this historical space and severely damage the historical integrity of the ruins, as well as the visual image that conjures up memory. The historical landscape is changed, and so is the narrative about Lifta. Yet it remains a painful memory for some.

In the case of Lifta, we would therefore hopefully see the archaeological excavations to encompass a total history, including all past occupation levels of Lifta. A joint project between Palestinian and Israeli archaeologists will be the route to go. Whether this will be a workable solution remains to be seen. The difficulty of working on previously occupied Palestinian villages are difficult, not only because of the bureaucratic procedures to gain permission from the authorities, but also because of the difficulty of motivation and working at the site, as Kolska (2019) explains: “This sets the tone for archaeology. How can you expect an archaeologist and the next generation to look at these villages as historical monuments? They are ruins. It is just an effaced part of the landscape. Every time they go and dig a site, there is a village nearby or on top of the site. And then, you make a decision.” At Tell es Safi, for instance, they made a clear decision not to dig the cemetery on top of the mountain. They decided to move the excavation area so that it is not close to the villages.

According to Kolska, “Aren Maeir was interested to dig in the village, but that village was dynamited. It was an enormous issue. They had to move concrete blocks and heavy debris. And they think there was a military post on top as well, so there was a lot of action after 1948 – it just ruined the place. But we have surveyed it nevertheless.”

The point raised by Kolska (2019) regarding the intervention of heritage protection and the archaeology of a site at an early stage is corroborated by Perring and Van der Linde (2009:211), who state the following:

The doing of archaeology, whether in the field or in the museum archive, provides an invaluable interface between people, past and place, and it has an under-utilised potential to contribute to both conflict resolution and social healing. The debate over the contemporary roles that we can find for the tangible and intangible heritage can also be used to redirect hostilities into areas where negotiated outcomes can be achieved. The past is not only a source of conflict, but also a place where we can find ways to build peace. The responsibilities that we carry are commensurately enormous.

There is a parallel and similar situation of historical archaeology and its problems of rewriting the history that I noted in terms of colonialist occupation sites and monuments in South Africa and that of Israel. However, the issue in Israel in my opinion is not about decolonisation but rather a case of conflict over geography and ideology. Kolska (2019) had the following to say about the situation in Israel:

It’s because these people don’t want to touch politics. It is immediately related to today. This is not South Africa where the Dutch have gone, and today we have liberation. We opposed the whole thing of Apartheid in South Africa, but here we are documenting the beginning of Apartheid, and this is evident for us as left-wingers. It is still very much the ethos. Here people do not want to touch the subject because the conflict is not finished. As yet we still have not moved on.

However, some scholars remain hopeful. Kolska (2019) highlighted about working on historical sites and some work that they do on another Palestinian village:

What we are trying to do is to address that problem and to do that by excavating a 1948 village and doing it as archaeologists in a proper way. Obviously, there is a political motivation, but we are doing it professionally and hopefully, we will then spread the word, and we will have millions of disciples. If you show people that it is possible, and you show people that the world does not collapse if you go and dig a Palestinian village, and do it properly and publish it, I’m sure more people will do it. That is what I am hoping. But as I said, I’m an optimist.

The current situation in Israel, as far as the archaeological practice and discourse are concerned, seems to be a clear path for Israelis; however, it begs the question: Where do the Palestinians stand as far as this is concerned and of what use is archaeology at the moment? Sarie (2019) has alluded to the fact that Palestinian archaeology is struggling to keep its head above water. Other respondents have also mentioned that the current conflict in Gaza has

basically caused the archaeology there to suffer severe setbacks. It appears that the archaeology is completely reliant on the socio-political background against which it operates and the way with which archaeologists align to these social-political constraints. We see that this has been a difficult obstacle course for scholars to negotiate and, as a large resort, many have chosen to distance themselves from the political discourse. I would argue that this is not sustainable and will lead to some potentially important historical archaeological projects to become too hot to handle. In the light of this we need to take cognisance of the fact that archaeology should also be able to deal with the present. To be a useful discipline in this regard, getting involved in the present will make it endure and keep its relevance in a fast-changing world. Israel and the West Bank, with its history, its religion, its strategic value to the West as well as its multiple cultural influences, are extremely exposed to be exploited by external ambitions. At an AIA (Archaeological Institute of America) conference, Lynn Meskell underpinned the importance of not claiming neutrality in archaeologically *hot zones*. Referring to Shoup & Monteiro (2008:329), she argued by using a contentious site in South Africa: "... it is the responsibility of archaeologists to challenge the domination of the public image of Mapungubwe by amateurs and enthusiasts, which both discredits South African archaeology and robs indigenous groups of their connection to the site."

As Dawdy (2009:132) explains:

Since the turn of the last century, archaeology has made several attempts to 'be useful' to contemporary society – from V. Gordon Childe's Marxism to the disastrous nationalism of Kossinna. In fact, it is the latter's haunting legacy to archaeology which makes this an existential question. Is there any safe way to apply archaeology to contemporary social or political conditions without the risk that it will be harnessed for ill? The 1990s burst of studies on nationalist archaeology. Once we open the door, accepting that archaeology should be useful, can we control the uses to which it is put, and by whom? This is the Pandora's box problem that causes many to retreat into a space of objectivism and detachment. Others try to walk an odd line of being politically engaged with the past but disengaged from the present.

The following questions arise: From a secularist point of view, is the society of both Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank homogenous? And from a heterogenous and non-secularist point of view, are there many differences in the cultural background and is this the case? Are there other obstacles, apart from the creation of the State of Israel, to finding common ground and is archaeology complicit in separating the history of the Israeli and the Palestinian?

Issa Sarie, as a rule, works on prehistoric sites but heads up archaeology at a Palestinian University. He expounds on the contradictions of both the development of the scholars and

the current situation that prevails in the archaeology in Israel. Sarie (2019) explains: “Israelis don’t talk about the era before the House of Omri – their masters. In the beginning, they used to dig with bulldozers through the Islamic period, the Crusader period, the Byzantine period and the Roman period until they come to the Iron Age.” He asks the following question: “Is the Iron Age the history of Palestine, the history of an Israel group, or is the Israel group controlling the history of Palestine?” His conclusion is no, “because they don’t see the evidence of the early Israelites exclusively.” He then asks two questions: “If you are looking for the evidence, why wipe it out? Why focus on this period?” The answer is of course: “This period is part of the whole chronology of Palestine and all its inhabitants.”

They have people living here for nearly 800 000 years, from the prehistoric maps. Even the evidence goes back to a million years. Sarie exclaims:

Of course, there is migration, of course people are coming from everywhere – because it is the geographical centre and graphical area. Traders come here, also disciples with all the Phoenicians who goes all over the world. Also, the Romans, the Egyptians, the Assyrians. It is all the time full of different people, all the time there is change. When the Egyptians came and they expelled the people, where did they go? They went north (Sarie 2019).

Sarie (2019) believes that people move for various reasons and explains why: “Sometimes they even moved because of the environment. Therefore, they could not live in a sustainable way in one place as Palestine was never a big country. Palestine doesn’t have a homogeneous group to have real nationalism and were able to live as one nation in a big country like the Assyrians or like the Egyptians.” It was always small chiefdoms, they lived around the big cities with regions around them, but they did not have the power to control all the areas. He suspects they could have influence over the “power of the next chiefdom, but one has to remember that all the chiefdoms were either linked to Egypt or Mesopotamia or the Assyrians.” In the past then nationalism in Palestine would have been a foreign notion and any such attempts would have been thwarted by the imperial powers who held sway over the land.

I discussed the paradigmatic changes of archaeology alluded to earlier on with Sarie (2019) and drew comparisons to the hard sciences. In science, the paradigm shifts between Copernicus, Einstein, Quantum Mechanics; where the evidence does not fit the paradigm anymore, the paradigm either needs to change or the facts are wrong. And here the archaeological facts are either wrong or it is given another meaning. I asked him whether that was what he meant and he answered as follows:

Yes, they are wrong. You cannot change what people believe in all the time, and you can't change the school of thought or create it to fix the belief of the people with data and evidence. So, biblical archaeology aims to corroborate the story of the Bible with evidence from archaeology; it is also not a vice versa. If you have this intention and you have all these schools of thought, all this money pumped into this project of yours, how are you going to change it? It is easier to change the evidence of the archaeology because it is according to the interpretation of the site and can be manipulated. One can change this, but you cannot change a global statement, especially when it becomes a global Protestant or Jewish statement and narrative (Sarie 2019).

The current tensions between Israel and the West Bank are also not conducive to the development of Palestinian archaeology. Sarie (2019) explains:

Since the Albert Glock times, we were not able to develop our archaeology because of a lot of problems, and mainly financial problems. Before, what we called then the Peace of Process, it was difficult for us to work, because we need a permit and permits do not come from the Israeli antiquities. It comes from the military and is controlled by the military and its officers.

He makes it clear that this was controlling the West Bank.

If you wanted to do a dig, you have to get a permit from them. All the permits for digs in the West Bank comes [sic] from the military. And they can say what they want because they are the only ones who are allowed to allocate the projects on these sites. They can show you evidence and tell you to read a specific book, and you have to do it.

Sarie holds that there is “a lot of archaeology colleagues that criticised the work of the civil administration and the military archaeological department, such as an archaeologist from Tel Aviv University. He wrote a lot of things, and it was a catastrophe for him.” After the Palestinian Antiquity, according to Sarie, “some of the expeditions came from Italy, for they have more knowledge than we have. They are more experienced, and they have money. We worked with them as in the old times – the big boss and the small follower.” They do small-scale excavations on their own as a university for training their students, but there is a problem about who wants to pay for the excavation. It is only a couple of hundred or thousand Shekel, which is nothing compared to one big excavation, which costs a million dollars. Sarie (2019) explains that it is not so much money as for the big excavations, but there are also the following constraints:

Sometimes they cannot dig, they do not have a few thousand Shekel to dig. The problem with education is also that it costs a lot of money and Palestinians do not have the money, because they are mostly at work in Israel. Sometimes they do not work and then they cannot pay tuition for their children. Al-Quds University is the only archaeological centre, so it is in the middle of this problem. People from the north and the south come to them and then it means renting houses and buying food. And when they are finished with their studies there is a lack of jobs. The only other place for work is the Department of Antiquity and they do not hire a lot of people. So, the scholars do not have a lot of opportunities and we suffer from this dilemma.

The archaeology from the West Bank and its future remains in a precarious situation, and the students who study archaeology at the Palestinian or Israeli universities are lost to their home country as they get global scholarships and build their future abroad.

Sarie (2019) explains:

They go everywhere if they have money, the rich people, they go everywhere. Sometimes they have grants for studies in Germany or France. But when they do not get grants, they must come here to our universities and it is not easy. It costs a lot of money, and since the financial crisis with the authorities and with the universities, they need all the money to pay for the tuition. That is why we suffer, and we are on the brim of closing. If we do not have students, we must close; it nearly happened in 2018. We are the only Archaeology Institute at Al-Quds, so, if we close, it means archaeology will close as a subject at the university.

There are some liberal universities that invest in projects from abroad to expand the archaeology and curatorship in the West Bank, but it is not enough. Goa (2019) explains:

Yes, it is small. The University of Leiden in Belgium, for example, has funded Shechem and they built a nice museum, – audio-visual, which I thought was very good. But, because they have no proper marketing skills, they do not know how to promote the place, and there is no proper infrastructure. To get there, you must use a mud road to get inside. But once you are inside, it is beautiful, huge cycloptic walls and it is a very beautiful modern museum. It is neglected. There is no infrastructure for it and the Palestinian authorities are just a total disaster. They do not know that they are sitting on a golden egg. If they can develop archaeology, crowds will be coming in like crazy, bringing in the money.

The importance, as well as the neglect of the Muslim/Arab periods in the archaeological history of the region, is recognised by Israeli scholars, as Herzog (2019) explains:

Yes, it is neglected by most of us. Naturally again as part of our general view, we had an interest in periods which reflect more of the history of the Jewish people during the Second Temple and in the First Temple period, and even the earlier phases which were considered as the Canaanites. So, these later periods were probably less interesting for us, we did excavate there, but in many other cases, if we had the choice to choose a site, which has different layers, we did choose the ones which we thought would reveal the most. In this respect, most of the Jewish period excavations and its relevant theories would be preferred. That is to study the phases which are related to our period and not the Arab periods.

According to Herzog (2019),

... there is a much smaller number of scholars who are experts of this period and much less publication on the history and archaeologies of the Islamic period. This was a very long period. That is from the Arabic conquest in the 7th century, which is thirteen hundred years of history and which is not well demonstrated in the archaeology. The Palestinians currently do some work, but it is on a small scale.

Mizrahi (2019) believes that the lack of major archaeological excavation of Palestinian history is historical and that the interest or lack of it is circumstantial in nature and reason.

He argues:

Archaeology is more popular in Israel than in Palestine, the whole academy in terms of archaeology is much more developed in Israel than in Palestine. But we must understand it and the context. There is a difference between archaeology as a science that came from the West, which is a relatively new science. The discipline came with the people, the Israeli people at least when we were all immigrants. Two or three generations of immigrants. It does not really matter now, but they have this quest or focus on the story of the people. Here they have the feeling that the people came two or three generations ago, but their ancestors were here for two or three thousand years. That is something that cannot be understood by someone whose family, for example, came from Europe two hundred years ago. So, you know that your family came one hundred, or two hundred or three hundred years ago, it does not matter. You also understand that your family did not come to South Africa two thousand years ago.

Mizrahi (2019) explains the situation in Israel:

Here we say Zionism began about one hundred years ago and we came back to Israel. And that is something. The archaeology can show us the Jewish rule and so on. The Palestinians do not have this, because they have been here all the time and it does not matter in what form or manner. What I am saying is that they moved from one place to the other, and they were part of the Arab world and they know this. So, they have this history which is that they are part of the region for hundreds of years and thousands of years, they do not see the gaps that we see. So, the need for archaeology is much less in their world. They do not need to justify that their ancestors lived here. It is quite clear. And we do, and therefore I think it is less popular among the Palestinians.

All the scholars I spoke to was sympathetic about the state of Palestinian archaeology, and it is quite clear that the situation needs to be addressed. Ussishkin (2019) expressed his concerns:

The Palestinians are all in all in a very miserable situation, and they have other problems that are more important than archaeology. However, I certainly wish to see more work done by Palestinians. They have a department of archaeology in Ramallah. I know a few people, Hamdan Taha was the head of the department, a very good man. They have some good people, no doubt, and they have at least one university, Birzeit, which deals with archaeology.

Ussishkin (2019) asks:

What can you expect in Gaza for instance? Nothing much. Other problems must be solved first, but still, I wish they will do more. They did some work with European cooperation in ancient Shechem for instance, which is part of the city of Nablus. There was some cooperation with the Dutch, they tried to arrange an excavation on a mound and prepared to revisit some sites and restore things, but I think it didn't work out for them in this instance. They have some good people in archaeology. But certainly, as far as I am concerned, it will be very nice to have more work done by them. However, I don't see any competition between them and us.

What is evident is that the archaeology in Israel has fully realised and embraced the potential of tourism and the money that it can contribute towards the local populations. One only needs to look at Caesarea and Beth-Shean to name but two in the form of national parks, combined with archaeological and cultural themes. No consideration is given, and rightly so, to the critique by some scholars that the connection of the local people who live at the sites are exploited for monetary gain. This type of cultural archaeology is normally frowned

upon by scholars and viewed as “inauthentic and exploitative” (Shoup & Monteiro 2008:332). However, we know now that there are potential projects in Israel and the West Bank that can be used in this way to involve the local population and which would bring the and two groups together. It does not only have to be costly excavations that can achieve this. Archaeological stewardship involves the local population and the monetary benefits that it brings. It gives people a vested and measurable stake in the past. However, archaeological stewardship cannot be a one-size-fits-all template but should take into consideration the local circumstances (Shoup & Monteiro 2008:332).

According to Fantalkin (2019), Palestinian archaeology suffers from the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the occupied territories, which are under the auspices of and regulated by the IAA. However, the impact felt on scholarship is not specific to Palestinian Arabs only but also to non-Arab Palestinians. Some of the work done is of a good standard under the circumstances. Fantalkin explains:

General archaeology in the occupied territories are [sic] lagging behind that of Israel as they do not do much archaeology. The archaeology under the Palestinian Authority is not necessarily neglected, however, the territories are considered occupied, and that makes it difficult. The Israel Antiquities Authority has oversight of the archaeology conducted in these areas. They are part of the IAA, but by law, they are also part of the military – a big administrative apparatus which involve administration, the military, and archaeology. It is a part of it because they are supposed to preserve the site from robbers. They do good archaeology, and it is important, because it is mostly salvage projects, sites that have been robbed by villagers. But the amount of studies that they are producing is very small. It is not significant at all. Most of the work is done by Israelis because of the situation, and by foreign scholars that come and excavate there. For example, excavations in Jericho is done by Italians and Russians who were and are still very active.

There are various reasons why Palestinian archaeology is neglected. The situation is complex. It is very tricky because everything that is here is interlinked somehow. You have a lot of Arabs, Israeli Arabs and Palestinians who see themselves as Palestinians. So, for example, you cannot claim that you are an Egyptian because your parents came from Egypt. It does not matter any longer. They are Palestinians, and this is their identity, and it is the same with Israelis. It is also a forced identity of people who came from the Soviet Union or somebody who came from Morocco. This is the situation here. “So, what exactly unites us?”, Fantalkin asks. His answer is:

It is a new and unique experience in this part of the land. The identity is artificially enforced. The same with Palestinians but this forced identity started earlier of course because there was a continued presence of a Arab population here. But then the question is when you have Israeli Palestinians, Israeli Arabs, who is Palestinian according to his or her own identity. They work in huge numbers on Israeli archaeological projects and are in top positions at the Israeli Authority. What kind of archaeology are they doing you may ask? Are they doing Palestinian archaeology or are they doing Israeli archaeology?



They are doing Israeli archaeology, not Jewish archaeology. They are doing Israeli archaeology where Israel corresponds to the notion of both Jews and Arabs. They are doing something together, so they are doing Israeli archaeology.

The above view by Fantalkin is noted but yet in the broader scheme it is only academic. The public perception, as well as that of the Palestinian scholars, is still mainly influenced by the conflict that exists between the Israelis and the Palestinians. I believe that once a political solution is reached that will satisfy both parties, the situation of the Palestinian archaeology will change for the better and would co-operation be possible.

## 4.2 Popular archaeology and media

Initially and during the preparation of my research proposal, I was sceptical and perhaps a little hesitant to use words such as ‘nationalism’ in my research questions. However, this assertion and fear of it on my part proved to be ill-founded. As I progressed with the research the words such as *right* and *left* in a political and archaeological framework surfaced sporadically.

As this is the last section, dealing with public and media perception, I think that it would be pertinent to include one of my own experiences. On a business trip to the city of Brussels in Belgium during 2017, I stumbled upon, and by sheer chance, a newspaper clipping from *De Standaard der Letter* dated 1963. This clipping was folded and inside a second-hand copy of a book that I bought at a second-hand bookstore. The book was titled *The holy land: new light on the prehistory and early history of Israel*, published in 1957 by *N.V. Electriche Drukerij en Uitgeverij* in cooperation with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Exploration Society. The introductory note is a printed letter to the editor, W.A. Ruysch of *Antiquity and Survival*, a publication from The Hague in the Netherlands, written and signed by the then Israeli president I. Ben-Zvi.

The newspaper clipping reported on an article titled *Masada onzet*, which covers the breaking news of Yigael Yadin’s excavation of Masada. The newspaper article ends with the journalist quoting a poem. The author writes: “Masada is voor de Israeli’s een heilige plaats geworden. Een popular episch gedicht begint met de woorden ‘Masada zal geen tweede keer val ...’ (*De Standaard der Letter* 1963).

It piqued my interest, and I realised the power of the media, given that the original owner of the book had gone to the trouble to cut out the newspaper article and to safeguard it against

damage by carefully folding the clipping and placing it in the book. Somehow the book ended up in the bookstore and, as a student of biblical archaeology, I found it in Brussels, Belgium in 2017. Its discovery by me and the actions of the original owner of the book illustrated that nationhood and its ideologically driven nationalism was a real and powerful symbolic gesture, which paid homage to the establishment of a new nation still in its infancy. The date when the book was published and the personal letter of the then president of Israel, seeing it fit to personally thank the editorial team and the contributors, which include the biblical archaeologists who set the tone for the modern development of the discipline, further illustrated this conviction of the people of Israel. It includes scholars such as Jean Perrot, S. Yeivin, M. Dothan, Y. Aharoni, Yigael Yadin, N. Avigad and Nelson Glueck, among others (Ruysch 1957:79).

This synchronistic find and realisation of the magnitude and complexities of the archaeology of Israel gave me the confidence to tackle the topic with full knowledge of the possible sensitivities that I might face and then to travel to Israel, a country and people which I have grown to love and respect, and to try and find the source of this energy with which the archaeology of Israel has developed and flourished. I did this without the sanctuary offered by the anonymity that reading would proffer. Here I could not only rely on the written source such as found in the public media space or journals or books. My feeling of trepidation was unnecessary. My reception in Israel and my discussions with all the scholars were open, frank and done with warmth, conviviality and friendliness, and all showing a great passion for the subject of archaeology, as one would expect. I am forever grateful to them for this. Now how does this lead to the topic at hand? It was the simple act by the original owner of the book that slipped the article of Masada between the pages of the book more than half a century ago. This act by the owner is indicative of how close history, religion, identity and a culturally based ideology lie at the heart of the matter, as well as the commonality shared with the land and the sense of spatial belonging. This I believe is often overlooked by scholars or at the very least underestimated, even by us as members of the general public, until we are confronted with it.

During my research I noted the frequent mention of funding or sponsorship of excavations, which often is the overriding factor for the decision to go ahead with a project or not. To a large degree, one can surmise that such funding would need the consent of public approval in case the authorities are blamed for wasting the taxpayers' money and/or disturbing the peace and the traffic flow, should the site be situated in a high-density area. Nevertheless, it

seems that public opinion and citizens play an often-unrecognised role in archaeological activities around the world. We know that this is the case in Israel. Hence, one can also surmise that money will flow where there is an expectation of success, as well as good return made on the investment. This is present in popular archaeology. One only needs to look at the media craze around the Howard Carter excavations of Tutankhamun in 1922 and the subsequent money that was put into the project, as well as the craze of “Egyptomania”, which held sway over the gentry of Europe (Brier 2004:16). There is, however, another side to this. Unpopular archaeology, as perceived by the reigning regime, may view any other archaeology that does not conform to the status quo or that can have a potential revolutionary interpretation in a negative light. Consequently, it would be side-lined by sponsors and popular media. In this section, I attempt to articulate the role of politics, the media, sponsorship and of course, as is very apt in the case of Israel, religion and charismatic religions, with its vast global networks which are centred in Jerusalem in particular. It is self-evident that money and power would play a major role in archaeology. I believe that the profit motive held by businesses and the political ambition of politicians would want to maintain the status quo at all costs. As Scham (2001:206) observes: “The pressure of money and power behind archaeology is not being applied to further the archaeology of the disenfranchised.”

Something that the broader public is not aware of is the high cost of archaeological research, as well as its multi-disciplinary approach, which is not always mentioned in the media and which adds to the expense of projects. I would also argue that, to a large extent, the broader public still view the discipline as a search for evidence of past glories and ancient treasures and are not aware of the negative externalities and conflicts between all the stakeholders that archaeologists have to deal with in some projects. Just one example of such complexities would be the West Bank where Israeli archaeology is often viewed with suspicion by the authorities and where archaeologists need to be constantly aware of the sensitivities that surround the projects. Watson (2009:8), upon invitation by Birzeit University on the West Bank, notes as follows:

I spent several days with Glock and his students, being toured around archaeological sites on the West Bank, talking with them about work they had already done and work planned for the future. Glock was very explicit about his goal. He was preparing this select group of bright, well-educated indigenous young scholars to carry out their own archaeological research in their own country and to guide future generations of Birzeit students in learning about their own cultural history. My stay in the West Bank made a profound impression. There are few places in the world where every aspect of archaeological

research is so politicized and where practitioners must remain so continuously aware of the political intricacies integral to everything they say and do.

In Israel, archaeology is also politicised, much to the chagrin and frustration of the archaeological community. As illustrated in the example given below, Israel Finkelstein to a large extent bore the brunt of these attacks from politicians, religious leaders and the public. Watzman 2001:32) explains:

Among Israeli archaeologists, Finkelstein is considered a radical and a firebrand. To a large swath of the Israeli public, in particular those involved in the popular field of "Land of Israel Studies," Finkelstein is worse – they call him an anti-Zionist out to aid Israel's enemies. By challenging the truth of the Bible's version of history he is, they say, supporting the Palestinian claim that Jews are not really natives of their own land. Rabbi Yoel Ben-Nun, a leading figure in the West Bank settler community, said at a conference last year that the claims of Finkelstein and his like-minded colleagues are "really all an argument about Zionism." Finkelstein rejects such charges: "I'm sick of people saying that we're putting weapons in the hands of Israel's enemies. We're strengthening Israeli society. The debate we're conducting testifies to the resilience of Israeli society."

Both Finkelstein and Dever are cited as arguing that some of the biblical text must be taken into consideration as it does have some historical value and cannot simply be rejected. Balter (2000:30) reports:

Archaeologists working in the Holy Land are now struggling to define a middle way. "There are those who see the Bible as a religious document and nothing but trouble," says Dever. "But you must take the biblical texts as seriously as you would any other text. The Bible is the most extensive literary source for the Iron Age in Palestine, so the question is not whether to use it, but how." Finkelstein, despite his sympathy with some of the minimalists' points, agrees: 'In the more enlightened circles of biblical studies, there is a deep knowledge that the Bible is composed from different sources written at different dates and was edited and reedited many times. And yet I consider some of the biblical material to be historical writing,' he says. "People say, 'How can you trust some parts of it and not others?' But that is what we should be doing, sorting out what is history and what is not."

Archaeology has entered a new phase and a paradigmatic shift. The application of other disciplines such as DNA analysis, archaeochemistry and archaeophysics are now used in addition to the standard use of archaeobotanical, archaeometry, archaeozoology, ethnoarchaeology and geoarchaeology (Watson 2009:12). She writes:

It's a brave new archaeological world. But that brave new world is a fragile one because like every other scholarly pursuit archaeology, prehistoric or historic, anthropological or classical, is one very small component of a global human population that is currently highly politicized and severely threatened by planet-wide problems ranging from fiscal crises to pollution of the oceans and the atmosphere, desertification, epidemic diseases, and inadequate subsistence systems affecting millions of people.

The media play an important role in the public imagination. To a large extent, the media, whether popular scholarly publications or political quotes in the daily newspapers or websites, blogs and film, shape the narrative.

The power of the media is pervasive and relentless in its pursuit of sensationalising the Middle East. Two of the top newspapers in the US and Israel, respectively, may compete for the truth. Such an example is between the *New York Times* and *Haaretz*. Both are judged to be the equivalent of each other as far as journalistic and editorial quality is concerned. The Israeli and Palestinian conflict is thus described by Slater (2007:85) to illustrate the effect of public perception on the media and vice versa. He explains that “the prevailing view in the United States is that the Palestinians are overwhelmingly responsible for the continuing violence and political deadlock, and therefore there is little reason or justification for significant changes in the long-standing U.S. policy of nearly unconditional support of Israel”. Ironically, opposite views are held by Israelis. Slater (2007:85) explains that there is more informative and good journalism coming from *Haaretz* in Israel:

[C]andid criticisms of Israeli policy appear regularly in the Israeli press and news magazines, as well as in public statements by leading scholars, writers, retired military officers, intelligence officials, and even some politicians. Because public discourse in Israel is often self-critical and vigorous, there is at least the possibility of change in the policies that have thwarted a comprehensive peace settlement with the Palestinians.

An example of the candid treatment of a diversity of views here features in terms of heritage protection. This article by Rapoport (2008:82) appeared in the *Haaretz* in July 2007:

This was not the only Muslim holy place destroyed after Israel’s war of independence. According to a book by Dr. Meron Benvenisti, of the 160 mosques in the Palestinian villages incorporated into Israel under the armistice agreements, fewer than 40 are still standing. What is unusual about the case of Mashhad Nabi Husayn is that the demolition is documented, and direct responsibility was taken by none other than the GOC [General Officer Commanding] Southern Command at the time—an officer named Moshe Dayan. The documentation shows that the holy site was blown up deliberately as part of a broader operation that included at least two additional mosques, one in Yavneh and the other in Ashdod. A member of the establishment is responsible for the documentation: Shmuel Yeivin, then the director of the Department of Antiquities, the forerunner of the present-day [Israeli] Antiquities Authority. Yeivin, as noted by Raz Kletter, an archaeologist who has studied the first two decades of archaeology in Israel, was neither a political activist nor a champion for Arab rights. As Kletter explains, he was simply a scientist, a disciple of the British school and a member of the Mandate government’s Department of Antiquities who believed that ancient sites and holy places needed to be preserved, whether they were sacred to Jews, Christians, or Muslims.

Christianity can also easily become embroiled in controversy. We also see new theories evolving from the archaeological record about the New Testament, and particularly that of Jesus. Barbara Thiering, a divinity scholar, came up with new theories for interpretation and it took the public imagination by storm. On the website Westar Institute (2020), Barbara Thiering says of her work:

My series of Jesus books take the search for the historical Jesus into the wealth of new information I believe is offered by the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Gnostic literature, and the

apocryphal books. The search comes back to the gospels themselves, where there is an embedded history available by objective methods to those who hold that scripture is subject to the peshet technique. It is a natural political history, in which Jesus played an essential part, the history of the fusion of Diaspora Judaism with Greco-Roman culture. It includes an account of certain events that were part of that history, and that were deliberately built up as “miracles” for the sake of the “babes in Christ,” including the “virgin birth” and the “resurrection”.

I would argue that the public imagination is often stimulated and manipulated by revolutionary new ideas that overturn the established doctrines, especially in terms of religion and history. This occurs despite the critique of experts and the clear misinterpretation of archaeological artefacts by the authors, in this case of Thiering and the text of the Qumran Scrolls. L. Ron Hubbard’s Church of Scientology, whose membership includes prominent public figures and actors, will feature in this category. Very often media and money are the driving force behind these publicly focused movements, which as history teaches us, are short-lived.

It is also contained in the revolutions of scientific and philosophical discourse, and its impact on religion. It is therefore quite possible that the popular image of the archaeology by the non-secular public on all sides of the religious spectrum, which includes to a large extent Christianity, as well as Judaism, may be the last vestige of an exclusive dream. Tarnas (1996:321) points to the following progression of critical thought:

[P]erhaps the most pervasive and specifically Judeo-Christian component tacitly retained in the modern world view was the belief in man’s linear historical progress toward ultimate fulfilment. Modern man’s self-understanding was emphatically teleological, with humanity seen as a historical development from a darker past marked by ignorance, primitiveness, poverty, suffering and oppression, and towards a brighter ideal future characterised by intelligence, sophistication, prosperity, happiness, and freedom. The belief in that movement was largely based on an underlying belief in the salvation effect of expanding knowledge. Humanity’s future fulfilment would be achieved in a world reconstructed by science. The original Judaeo-Christian eschatological expectation had here been transformed into a secular faith.

Given the above trajectory in human experience, perhaps we are seeing a resurgence of the religious tenets of the three monotheistic religions in the human consciousness, all centred in the Holy Land and Jerusalem. This is because human reason and science have not delivered this ever-evasive *Utopia*, which is a space free from oppression and poverty. The growth of evangelist churches globally has now centred their corroboration of facts and the foundation of their faith once again in the archaeology of Israel, and the sponsors and media are willing and ready to oblige. During a conference held in the US during the mid-1990s, we already see the idea of nationalistic fervour taking hold of the people of Israel. Jones (1994:20) reports:

Most of the papers at the conference dealt with the place of archaeology in Zionist ideology and in Israel's national consciousness. Amos Elon, Yaacov Shavit and Neil Asher Silberman all attested to the critical role played by archaeology in the establishment of tangible connections between past and present, and the provision of myths of unity rooted in the past for the modern State of Israel. Sites such as Masada have become national symbols, institutionalised in military and political discourses. Furthermore, in what Elon described as a feverish search for a secular national identity, archaeology has become a familiar pastime for many Israeli citizens, almost a national rite. Nevertheless, there was some disagreement amongst speakers about the extent and nature of archaeology's role in the construction of national identity, and particularly the extent to which individual archaeologists have adopted nationalist agendas.

During my discussions with scholars in 2019, we see that there is still some difference of opinion in the current situation. However, none of the interviewees outrightly rejected the notion of nationalistic influence.

During the 1920s and the British mandate period, the archaeology of Palestine had the ear of the popular media and it is a strategy for an objective that reaches far beyond the scholarly interest or a public curiosity in history. The media carried the story that not only justified the custodianship of the region but also to significantly win public consensus to prove the biblical history and, in the process, declare the Bible as a historically and factual document. Davidson (1996:104) notes as follows:

This was a decade of major archaeological activity in Palestine as the British facilitated and systematized access to the country for Western archaeologists far beyond what was allowed under Ottoman rule. Indeed, article XXII of the mandate document for Palestine specifically states that "members of the League of Nations will be free to conduct archaeological research" (New York Times 2/5/21:11). The United States, though not a League member, also had open access in this regard. The biblical archaeologists of the West would respond with an enthusiasm that was laden with "expectation" as well as "pre-understanding". Specifically, this amounted to the "pre-understanding" that the Bible was historically true and the "expectation" that the new access to Palestine for archaeologists would demonstrate it to be so. The British were perhaps motivated to encourage archaeological activity because the results would popularise the biblical associations that tied the area to the West's Judeo-Christian heritage. Palestine was perceived as having a religious-mystical connection with the West. It was the cradle of Judeo-Christian tradition – the birthplace of Jesus and the "Promised Land" of the Jewish people. To confirm this through biblical archaeology was to assert Western claims in the area ...

For instance, the excavation of Palestine and Samaria, places that are frequently mentioned in the biblical text, was initially funded by Jacob Schiff. From the cost estimates of the first excavation, we can see that the cost of excavation of any site, for the aims of biblical archaeology in those days, was astronomical. Hallote (2009:240) writes:

As soon as the American School was founded, one of its most prominent supporters, the Rev. James B. Nies, applied to the Ottoman government for a permit to excavate Samaria. Nies had spent considerable time in Palestine and recognized the importance of Samaria as one of several great cities mentioned in the Hebrew Bible that might be worth

excavating. Nies also understood the cost associated with such an excavation, which would be \$50,000 according to his estimate.

Until this day, archaeology is only made possible by significant funding.

By far the most articles published during this period were from the United States. It appears from the number of archaeological topics covered that most of these were covering the Old Testament sites, with a disproportionate and much smaller number covering the New Testament. One newspaper, the *New York Times* was particularly active in this area. One could argue that the readership of the newspaper was influenced by a largely educated section of the population, and thus the occupation of Palestine by Arabs was an anomaly and one that should be remedied, as noted by Davidson (1996:106):

Names are of great importance in their power to evoke a sense of the familiar. In the newspaper reporting on the area in the 1920s, the familiar biblical Palestine was reincarnated through the incantational use of names sacred to the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. In other words, Palestine was undergoing a sort of temporal transposition where, from the point of view of the American public, the biblical past was real and the Arab present was either a scandal or a void being filled by a process that released the divine, biblical past from historical suspended animation. Here scripture became the dominant reference guide. Americans could actually witness this temporal transposition (a major component of “archaeological theatre”) simply by reading the NYT’s biblically annotated 119 pieces on archaeology.

In modern-day Jerusalem, the same may be said as in the past, and the image or connection of the Arab or Palestinian to the land is still absent during this historical search for the roots of the people from the Palestine of old. Kletter (2020:1) notes and asks the following regarding the current contentious site (Givati parking lot) in Silwan in East Jerusalem:

Eventually, some of “our” remains will be exhibited here, buried under a towering visitor-cum-entertainment-centre. The latest technologies will animate the show, but will they show the life of all the inhabitants of Silwan? The archaeology of El-Ad is limited to one people and two periods: First Temple, Second Temple. More than Iron Age archaeology, it is archaeology of Iron. Its *fossils directeurs* are strewn all around: metal fences, heavy iron-beam constructions, mesh wire, long rods bearing cameras and flags. Later levels, read Islamic levels, are removed, that is, destroyed, to reach “our” remains, which are preserved. Imagine living in a house beside the hole, years of noise and dust, even before construction starts. Silwan is one of the poorest neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem: barely 20 metres down from the pompous entrance to the El-Ad site the garbage “frog” overflows. Like all digs in East Jerusalem, the Givati site is surrounded by a metal fence. Outside, the fence is covered by colourful pop-art (probably rendered from pictures), presenting a futuristic vision. This vision is fast becoming past, crumbling, peeling off the metal; it has already been replaced more than once. El-Ad is an extreme right-wing, religious organization; but the vision on the fence is addressed to “common” Israelis and tourists and is therefore secular.

The use of pop art imagery on the fences surrounding the site appeals to the visitors and liberal-minded citizens, but the question remains whether the creative imagery is more ideologically inspired. To what extent is the site and its excavation by a politically motivated



organisation, such as El-Ad, pointing to a biased approach to the uncovering of history? Does it reflect the last century media coverage in the *New York Times* (NYT)? Media coverage, as well as selling the idea and motivation for the excavation, was also present during earlier years of the British mandate at Beth Shean, Jerusalem and Megiddo, as noted by Davidson (1996:108):

The NYT's reporting on specific excavation sites used language that appeared to universalise the importance of the origins of the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition while demoting the Muslim present. Thus Beth-Shean, one of the earliest sites to be excavated after the British takeover, was recommended for excavation by "great Biblical scholars" who have studied "Palestine as the key to the whole history of that section of the world" (NYT 4/24/21:VII,12). The writer pictured it as having a 20th-century "city" on the site that was now "depopulated". He relates: "Why this city ... became depopulated is not known, but probably it was due to the destructive policies of the Osmanli Turks, who left a blight wherever their feet have trodden" (NYT 4/24/21:VII,12). Beth-Shean, during a decade of reporting by the Times, was variously described as "one of the most important cities of the past, a spot over which no less than nine civilizations have lived" (4/24/21:VII,12); a place whose revelations will "stir the Western world ... deeply" (10/11/22:18); and as a "repository of the ancient secrets of the Holy Land" (12/16/23:X,3). Another site, the "City of David" excavation at Jerusalem, was "of such importance," because its "memories are considered sacred to many nations" (NYT 1/22/23:7). The famous British archaeologist R.E. Stewart MacAlister was brought to supervise the "City of David" work, whereupon the Times lamented that MacAlister had to take extraordinary precautions to prevent present-day Arabs from tampering with the Judeo-Christian past. This was "owing to the danger that these historic remains might be broken up and sold by native proprietors for building material – a fate that seems to have already befallen the bulk of the structures" (12/24/23:3). The Megiddo site (Armageddon) was described as "the battlefield of the ages", as well as the field where "Christian civilization had its beginning".

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls made headlines in the media. The Israelis saw the discovery of the scrolls as part of their biblical and geographical heritage, as Schiffman (2005:26) confirms: "The first discoveries in the caves of Qumran took place during and just after the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. The caves themselves are in territory that was first British Mandate Palestine, then Jordan, then territory conquered by Israel in 1967, hence their contested legal status and political value as a source of national pride."

With it came the conspiracy theorists who dished up a multitude of stories that would have been more fitting in a Hollywood blockbuster screenplay written by the writers of films such as we have seen over the years. The content of the scrolls also awakened an intense public interest, but not for theological or scientific interest or, for that matter, what transpired in the past. The discovery, the context and provenance of the scrolls, its meaning and its contribution, both to archaeological and historical research and academia, were rejected for the sake of a false notion of religious importance. In particular for a Christian origin.

Schiffman (2005) refers to this as “inverting reality”. Journalism plays an important part in this inversion of the facts and Schiffman (2005:25) holds the following opinion:

This inversion of reality is of course to be expected in sensationalist articles or videos. More surprising is the fact that supposedly responsible journalists often use these misconceptions as a come-on, allow responsible scholars to counter them, and then leave readers with the impression that there are varying views of equal legitimacy. Even responsible articles or videos will give equal time to impossible one-person theories on the false assumption that “all Dead Sea Scrolls theories are created equal”. Thus, the inversion of reality in the public mind results from its inversion in media coverage. In this respect, like so many other aspects of our modern culture, the media do not simply report “the facts and all the facts” or “all the news that’s fit to print,” but they shape the public perception. We will see as well that, besides being simply a shaper of the public image of the scrolls, the media have been a player in the history of scrolls research, leading to a sort of conflict of interest that here again is not atypical of trends in our general culture, as, for example, in the area of domestic politics.

Here we see that eventually scholars and archaeologists must defend their research on a particular artefact, and this defence is often caused by “the latest theory” (Schiffman 2005:28).

Many of these theories border on the bizarre and play havoc with the public’s imagination. In addition to this, legitimate institutions must spend much time and effort to set the record straight, which many times leads to a “media assault” (Schiffman 2005:32) on the custodians of academic scholarship. However, one must recognise the positive role that media can play in the publication of scholarly research. An important issue is the IAA’s defence against this conspiracy, which claims that the Israeli authorities are “hiding” the truth from the public. The media storm subsequently led to the liberation of the research and its publication, as put by Schiffman (2005:33):

The press, therefore, played a significant role in changing the rules of access to the scrolls, shaking up the leadership and composition of the international team, and improving the pace of the official publication in the Oxford University Press series *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*. The media accomplished far more than the individual scholars who petitioned to see particular manuscripts and far more than the decision of the IAA to set official, but never-met, deadlines for the publication of the texts.

We know that the mass exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is mostly a biblical myth and that the archaeology agrees with this. The treatment of the scrolls by some of the more nefarious scriptwriters and film producers adds ‘pseudo-techno science’ to its stories, such as the following:

“Traders of the Lost Scrolls,” also broadcast on BBC, tells the story of James Charlesworth as a scrolls discoverer, and features a variety of scholars and others-always in automobiles (this author in a Manhattan yellow cab). There is some interesting information, but it is all set in the story of a discovery that never materializes. Probably most problematic of all the programs that we will survey here is “The Pharaoh’s Holy

Treasure,” another BBC entry. It presents the unsupportable theory of Robert Feather that the Copper Scroll describes treasures, for the most part brought by the Jews from Egypt, which originated with Akhenaton and his followers. While I had ample time to rebut this impossible view, one has to question BBC’s wisdom in portraying Feather’s views at all, given their clear and obvious impossibility (Schiffman 2005:35).

Media also draw funding and if there is an angle of public interest, archaeology will benefit for the right reasons, as Maeir (2019) explains:

We all try to get the papers interested in what we are doing, and we want to communicate something that will catch the public’s interest. It goes for anybody working anywhere in the world because our funding comes from people who are interested in high profiles. Funding agencies want their funded projects to have a high profile, so they get credit for it. So, there is nothing wrong – as long as you don’t compromise your scientific integrity and interpretation.

On the issue of funding, Ussishkin (2019) sketches a scenario and uses a practical example of the City of David excavations:

Archaeology needs money and money is not that easy to come by. It involves a lot of money. So, if you come and say for example to some donor or private person, or the government, that there are a few bones of cats and it is a new type of cat which might be very interesting, or we are looking at what people were eating in the Bronze Age and so on, not much money will be given to such a project. But if you say Abraham or King David were here, and it is quite possible that we might find their remains, then immediately the money flows, and that is a great problem of course for scientific research because it is selective, but it also helps. Then of course, the archaeologists must find something to fit the wish of the donors.

Another example is Eilat Mazar, who says they found Solomonic walls. But Ussishkin (2019) believes they are not Solomonic. According to him,

... they are important walls but all much later in date. And she wrote a book about it, which is called, *Solomon’s walls* or something like that. And she relates about her association with some good people from New York who gave her money. She went to them, and asked money to dig Solomon’s walls in Jerusalem and she got a lot of money. Now, I ask you, can she later say that these walls are not Solomon’s? They will ask their money back. Maybe I think she believes it is all Solomonic, but still, she doesn’t have a choice in what she reports.

During our discussions, Ussishkin (2019) drew the following logical conclusion and a positive view, not only about his personal views, but also about corroborating or a lack of artefacts that do not fit the theory:

I have talked only about the negative things, but there are also in nationalism positive things. And, naturally, if I am talking about myself, I am very much a nationalist and I want a liberal state, I want a Jewish state, a Jewish nationalist state. There is no doubt about it. And it is very nice that archaeology also shows the roots of the Israelite nation in the country and parts of the Bible are true and so on. But all these things should be done in the right proportion, and there are enough correct things, and I don’t mind that of course there are things which are showing that in biblical times there were Israelite and Judean states which prospered. But just to be objective about what there was, it is good enough. Hazor will be a great city without a Solomonic Gate and Jerusalem will be a great place even if David did not have a palace.

The media plays an important role in the conveyance of this newfound knowledge, but it will always be seen through the lenses of some ideological preconception. The media needs to sell its publications. Television needs to attract viewership to maximise its advertising contribution. We find that in many cases, programmes on television would attract viewers with the promise of revealing ground-breaking secrets about the church and involving political scandal or pseudo-science and even extra-terrestrials.

We only need to look at the popularity of series such as *Ancient Aliens*. Trigger (1984:357) alluded to these sensationalist pseudo-archaeological conspiracy theories: “The widespread belief among supporters of Erich von Daniken that professional archaeologists are wilfully concealing evidence of the existence of extra-terrestrial benefactors is an extreme example of the bizarre passions that interpretations of archaeological evidence currently arouse.”

None of it is a fact. Some coverage would even go as far as including doomsday cults and outlandish theories to attract followers and members who must be paid-up members, of course. Nevertheless, it is a forgone conclusion that the media and monumental archaeological discoveries are inextricably linked, and that the one feeds the other. Scholars need the media attention to get sponsorships, and the media need sensation because it sells.

Archaeology is usually at the centre of controversy, but it is not the choice of the archaeologist to be there. As Trigger (1984:357) illustrates: “... archaeologists generally are caricatured as embodiments of the myopic, the unworldly and the inconsequential, the findings of archaeology have always been sources of public controversy. Many of these controversies have centred around conflicting claims of national priority and superiority.”

This unintended consequence is driven by public sentiment and politicians. What we are currently seeing in Jerusalem has both positive and negative externalities. On the one hand, the media and politicians on both sides of the conflict can use an archaeological project as an argument to gain support among the public and, in doing so, further an ideology or shoot down an ideology. On the other hand, the sponsors and proponents of the project will expend much more funds and attract scholars from a global fraternity to gain experience and keep archaeology alive as an important and crucial science, and to provide historians and scientists with the data.

Whichever way you look at it, the discovery and media attention of archaeological artefacts have an impact on the “formation of modern culture” (Schiffman 2005:37).

Communication, getting the attention of the public, as well as media and funding, are of paramount importance, and the reigning authorities will look at it from this angle, regardless of political sentiments.

Kolska (2019) points to some examples:

The moment, the government is involved, and they have a very particular ideology, it doesn't matter if it is a left-wing or a right-wing government, they both have ideologies. They channel funding into various kinds of projects. For example, under right-wing governments, we have had enormous development of archaeological sites on the West Bank, run by Israeli groups and settlers.

Examples of sites that have been developed are the Herodian, Herod's site, and Shiloh or Tel Shiloh, which has an enormous museum now. It is also run by settlers. The sites itself are not much to look at, but there is a beautiful museum. They are developing sites within Israel. Kolska states that there is "no massive museum at Hazor, but Hazor is a very important site; archaeologically it is probably the most important site. There is also the Temple Mount Sifting Project." Anyone, including tourists, can go there; volunteers will pay about \$40 and then they can work on the sifting material and help sift it and maybe find things. She makes it clear that "of course, archaeologically that has no meaning, no context but, they keep looking for stuff that will tie or corroborate this deposit to the Second Temple period." They find lots of stuff, but they also find lots of Islamic material or periods. Archaeologically you are never going to know where anything comes from.

Maeir (2019) alluded to the problem of funding and its impact as follows:

I have to work very hard for funding for the project I've been conducting at Tell es-Safi for close to 25 years. You know a lot of it comes from research foundations, some of it comes from the volunteers who work, and once in a while, you get a donation, but I do not have this *carte blanche* cheque that you can do whatever you want to. For example, in the city of David the Ir David foundation, which is an ideologically driven organisation, use the money that they have, and they have unlimited funding because they play the violin to all kinds of very wealthy Jews from abroad or Russian oligarchs, and they get the money. On the other hand, you can say that the archaeology that is being done is good and it is 10 times better than what is was.

He elaborates: "If I compare what they are doing in the city of David nowadays as far as methodology is compared to what Yigal Shiloh did in the 1980s – and his supposed outcome with an ideological agenda – he was just doing supposedly academic objective archaeology."

They are doing much better archaeology than he did. Maeir (2019) further states:

The methodological archaeology in Israel, for the most part, is very good. It is cutting edge and I think with the cutting edge methodologically also a higher awareness of theoretical issues and the intermixing of modern narratives in it. If you look at Ian Hodder

and his partners again, he says let us embrace the contemporary narratives and add that to our interpretation of the past. You need to differentiate between what's what.

Large TV networks have a massive interest in the archaeological spaces of Israel and especially Jerusalem. It also intersects with geopolitical issues and new settlements. Goa (2019) explains:

To some extent it is evangelical Christians who are doing this, who are financing all this to provide truth to the biblical text, as well as the occupation of the land. I think the influence of this is more from the evangelical Christians rather than the Israelis themselves. And it is very big, it is also in the newspapers. America decided to recognise the settlements.

But why did Trump do this? Goa (2019) further explains: "Because the evangelicals were pushing the agenda. This is his foundation and to give him the votes to be president, he had to fulfil it. They bring in millions of dollars every year. The Israeli's are very happy about it. They welcome them." He uses the example of the cave of Zedekiah:

Every Thursday there is a live broadcast of an American pastor who goes down to the cave and broadcasts from there. The roads are closed on the night and they have camera crews, and they are filming his preaching from this staged production and it is every week. It is a live broadcast to America. The evangelicals are all known as the friends of Israel because they are the largest group and even bigger than the Jewish communities living abroad. They are the single largest community that finances Israel.

Regardless of the archaeological provenance of places such as Zedekiah's cave, the frenzy that the media creates arouses the attention of the public and resonates with the romanticism of holy sites and especially the spaces in Jerusalem. Combined with religious ideology, it is the food of politics and will drive the public story, the scholarly discourse, and the funding.

Funding for biblical archaeology, is easier to get. The public interest is much broader and transcends the borders of the country. The global religious fraternity, as well as a scholarship from abroad have a vested interest in this. In addition, it draws tourists and attracts organised pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Mizrahi (2019) draws the following conclusions about the funding and the hype in the media:

[I]t is beyond the media and politicians, also by institutions. I think archaeology is doing good work, and I can understand why. I also think archaeology is interesting for people as it covers different periods, and it attracts many groups. I think what eventually is happening, is that the whole framework is geared so that you must get money from the government. It is much easier to raise funds for biblical archaeology. If I am doing a Byzantine excavation, I would probably get less. The biblical times of Jesus also have a higher rating. People do not really care what happened to Israel in the 10th century BC; nobody cares. Nobody cares about the pre-history of Islam, although it is very important. Archaeologically is difficult to rate. So, the situation is that the media and the money eventually go where the interest is. I still believe that many archaeologists are doing very good work, but the way the National parks as an institution presents it, the way it is educated, the whole framework favours religious archaeology.

In conclusion, the interpretation of archaeological finds by archaeologists may seem clear-cut and final on the surface but we need to understand that this is far more complex when considering the religious tenets and the historicity of the development of morals and ethics that are encapsulated in the religions of this region, which are part of the archaeology of the region. It is specifically true of this region. It is unique to Israel in the sense that it is the place where the three main monotheistic religions have its physical and metaphysical origins. It cuts across vast sectors of identity politics, cultural values, ethnic and religious belonging, and it involves sacred spaces. To this end the archaeological fraternity of the region needs to be extremely aware of its tenuous position.

As Hodder (2003:65) advises:

[A]rchaeologists should listen to and engage with local communities that are directly affected by and involved in archaeological sites. In many cases, the local communities are historically marginalized and in need of support. They are often disempowered and neglected. A remarkable example of an attempt to counteract this disempowerment is provided by the District 6 project in Cape Town, where a local community is being reconstituted through an archaeological and museum project.

The museum, from my own experience, forms part of both a local and international tourist route in Cape Town. However, archaeology should be involved not only to make media headlines during rescue excavations, but should be more proactively engaged in media and public commentary.

Nevertheless, it is a forgone conclusion that the media and monumental archaeological discoveries are inextricably linked and the one feeds the other. Scholars need media attention to get sponsorships and the media need sensation because it sells. Biblical archaeology can most certainly provide this.

So where does this leave biblical archaeology as far as the public and the archaeologists are concerned? The popularity of the history channels on television, which deal with archaeology and the past, is a sure sign that it is popular in the public imagination. Evangelical churches benefit from the archaeology of the Holy Land to corroborate their message. For the archaeologist, it is not to prove or disprove the Bible. As Cline (2009:133) remarks on the aims of modern biblical archaeology: "... its practitioners are concerned with investigating the material culture of the lands and eras in question and reconstructing the culture and history of the Holy Land for a period lasting more than two thousand years. And that is absolutely fascinating for professionals and the general public alike."

During my own conversations in Israel, I concluded that there is a lot of misunderstanding from the general public and other stakeholders in terms of biblical archaeology and its aims. The Iron Age is an interesting period. It needs to be excavated and interpreted.

Watzman (2001:33) concludes by taking a quote from Finkelstein: “Finkelstein is doing just what he did when he was younger – and what so many archaeologists in this part of the world did until just a couple of decades ago. He is linking up archaeological finds to the Bible’s story. He just tells that story differently than they did.” Watzman further asks: “Will archaeology be free of controversy then? ‘No,’ he says, grinning. ‘Then we’ll argue over the details.’”

If the practice of biblical archaeologists deviates from this path, woe betides them. Any other use of the discipline will cause its destruction. Political ideologies in the Near East will misuse it, which I believe are either political acts done by politicians to gain votes or by the media who will consciously misinterpret the archaeological data to influence historical narratives that get a life of its own in the media by going viral and which sow the seeds of discontent or form the basis for populist rhetoric in the public arena.

As a last thought, we note some motivations and facts about the impact of archaeology and where it sits in the public space, as well as in the political space. Ultimately, religion, living conditions and social justice cannot be determined by archaeology alone and an unhealthy reliance on such data to drive ideologies. Neither can archaeologists be ambivalent about the use of their research. As Little and Zimmerman (2010:137, 138) mention: “Although ideas about neutral science long blinded archaeologists to the cultural impact of their own discipline, realization of archaeology’s political embeddedness has opened up the field to setting our sights on lofty aims of creating justice, building peace, and promoting human rights as well as mitigating human suffering anticipated with massive ecological change.” They also emphasise: “Because archaeology straddles many boundaries, it has the potential of reconfiguring the often-paralyzing divisions between scientific, humanistic, artistic, and spiritual worldviews.”

Finally, as Maeir (2014:301) argues, it is not necessary for biblical archaeologists to “quake with fear” just in case “modern ideology will affect and distort our interpretations”. Maeir (2014:301) further holds the view that only robust and “scientific practice” and the recognition of “scientific paradigms” within which biblical archaeology operates will, as he calls it, be “stewards and ‘carriers’ of the past for the general public”.



Perhaps it is time that we heed these suggestions. Archaeology in the public space should not just be dominated by possible monumental finds such as the Ark of the Covenant, Noah's Ark, or the Tomb of Tutankhamun. It needs to add value to the human and environmental condition and more so in areas of conflict.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5.1 Conclusion

Archaeology like any other discipline, whether it is in humanities, the social sciences, or natural science, is bound by paradigmatic boundaries of time and space. It operates within the constraints of knowledge, moral and ethical codes. We know that nationalistic ideology dictates history and that this history is not always balanced but that the rubric against which this balance is measured is political and social constructs and thus fallible. Scientific discourses share the same subjectivity in interpretation, and it is difficult to arrive at one objective conclusion. In hard science such as physics, the adoption of a new paradigm is based strictly on the condition that the new knowledge cannot be explained by the old paradigm. As a result, a revolution of knowledge takes place and a new paradigm is born.

Similarly, the methodologies in archaeology, as well as in the interpretation of the data, have gone through revolutionary changes. In the sterile environment of a laboratory or a particle accelerator where the nature of things and its relationship with the universe is being studied, the use of theory is ultimately important. The theory comes before and later the practical application, but sometimes we see that the practical application of these theories can have tragic consequences if used for the wrong reasons. In other words, there are both negative and positive externalities that become part of the political and ideological debate. A case in point is Einstein's theory that energy equals mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. The result was a warning sent to the scientific world, as well as to politicians, that if used as a strategic weapon, the result is unpredictable and can have tragic consequences for life and the environment.

Similarly, we see this present in archaeology but much more subtle perhaps. The writing of history can also have tragic consequences in terms of identity, nationalism and social well-being, if applied in the wrong way. The Eurocentric interpretation we know have presuppositions imbedded in it, especially as far as the Middle Eastern region is concerned. In the past, this was driven by imperialism and later by colonialism. The region, formally known as Palestine, and its people were part of this, and the region eventually became embroiled in bitter geopolitical debates and conflict.

To a large extent, external influences such as international treaties and foreign policies have created the problems experienced in regions such as Germany and the Middle East, including the Near East. Zionism originated because of the persecution of Jews in Europe, and as a consequence these minority groups were forced to move. International treaties determine the fate of many and the unintended consequence of this is unhappiness. People of one cultural or ethnic group are represented by a previously foreign government because of the fragmentation of land and the creation of new borders. This is very often driven by greed and commercial exploitation. One would also be forgiven for believing that most treaties were and are still formulated by superpowers with nefarious goals, such as colonialism in the past and capitalist or neo-colonialist expansion in the present. Historically, the colonialist occupation of the Middle East by England and France is a case in point and presently foreign economic policies are implicit. In the past, geopolitical manoeuvring created a perfect storm in the Palestinian region and its effects have spilt over into nationalistic debates, conflict and war. The archaeology of the region had no other choice but to operate in this landscape. However, since 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel, the motivation for mainstream Israeli archaeology turned away from the pursuit of proving the Bible correct. The biblical text became a secondary reference, and any similarities found, I believe, would be treated with the same scholarly interest as any other significant find in the form of an artefact and textual references. Just like in any other part of the world, archaeology is used to determine historical roots. In the beginning, the development of the nationhood of Israel was fraught with controversy, but what eventually strengthened and brought about the unity of the people of Israel was the wars waged against its establishment, and this ultimately determined the strength of its nationalism. This would have influenced all its citizens, the public and the academia in equal measure.

In modern-day Israel, there are only a few Israelis who do not have a feeling of nationalist pride, and it should not be questioned or viewed with suspicion.

However, what is required is a concerted effort to bring the Palestinians and the Israelis to the same table but, as we know, the chances of settling in the near future are slim. Moreover, cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian archaeologists is minimal and is at this stage only measured by respect and recognition of scholarly contributions.

There is probably no other region where there is such a plethora of ancient human occupation and, added to it, such a rich diversity of historical and cultural stratigraphy. For a young

student of archaeology to be able to take part in one or two excavation seasons is indeed a rite of passage. However, this falls within the scope of romanticism, as this is not shared by the local Palestinian people whose ancestors have lived in this region for thousands of years, but whose archaeological record is ignored.

The interviews that I have conducted revealed that there is much to consider. Some of the respondents have indeed agreed that the archaeology has gone through paradigmatic shifts and others are still of the opinion that it is not enough to be inclusive and representative of a level playing field regarding the historical roots of everyone.

I do not believe that the archaeology of the region can remove itself from the impact of ideology as the archaeology deals with human experience, in the past as well as in the present. The impact of history, as indeed facilitated by archaeology, reveals touchpoints that are endemic to the region and determines the future of the people of Israel and the West Bank. I believe that both the Palestinian and Israeli scholars are acutely aware of this dichotomy in the current situation. The problems that they are facing are political ideologies that were imposed through various periods of foreign occupations and ambitions of statehood, as well as a current very politicised climate which would prevent academic cooperation. It would fly in the face of political policies, influenced by the occupation of land, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, as well as personal loyalties.

We have established that a nationalist agenda in archaeology was present in the past, but is that such a strange thing and is it specifically unique to Israel and the West Bank? No, it is not unique to the Middle East and, therefore, it cannot be used against the archaeologists of Israel. It is the political system within which archaeology is operating. We also know that the West has laid claim to the heritage of the broader Levant and has had a specific interest in the history of the Holy Land through religion. What is unique to the archaeological deposits is that the three monotheistic religions of the world had its origin there and most of this is concentrated in the city of Jerusalem. From a religious point of view, as well as illustrated in history, these religions were the cause of terrible wars and human suffering. The religious and cultural spaces of Jerusalem are valuable for people around the world. People will sacrifice their life for this and are currently still engaging in bitter conflict over their holy spaces. It has nothing else of value, only its place in space and in time. Even in a perfect world where there is no conflict, the task of archaeologists to disseminate all data into a history coherent to all would be immense. The debate about whether a processual or

post-processual approach to the archaeology of Israel is more relevant than the other has also been widely argued. The features and nature of the physical sites' formation do not allow a strictly post-processual methodology as one would expect in Europe and in new world archaeology such as the US, where human occupation and deposits of prehistory are scant. The dilemma that the archaeologist faces in Israel is twofold. The area is highly politicised, and no matter which approach is taken, the possibility of disputes will always be present. Second, if a more post-processual approach and historical archaeology is catered for, to what extent is it given any serious academic scrutiny and will it not merely be a case of paying lip service to the liberalisation of the discipline in Israel? There is a case for cohesion between Israeli archaeology and Palestinian archaeology. However, where does that leave Iron Age archaeology? I believe that the answer lies in the application of the archaeological interpretation and that the funding is out of proportion to the current issues that faces the people of the region.

Archaeology is inadvertently fuelling the fire of conflict further. One only needs to read about the comments made about the Jerusalem excavations mentioned in this thesis. The availability of funding, political policy and the ambition to prove a point override the rational. The result is that, ultimately, ideology can dictate in these conditions. So, what can be done about the ongoing conflict in archaeological discourse and excavation? Establish a bilateral 'buy-in' between government and antiquities authorities, such as the IAA, and the PAA-sanctioned archaeological project, which deals with historical archaeology, will transcend geopolitical issues, and which is free from ideology. To discontinue the excavation of Iron Age sites will be short-sighted and will rob the archaeological world of a valuable resource of knowledge. Vetted interpretation will be present in any case but continue to encourage lively debate between scholars (which I believe is present anyway). The bilateral writing of history is *sine qua non* not only to the survival of archaeology as a credible tool, but also the future of the people of Israel and the West Bank. There is enough expertise in Israel and the West Bank, which I am sure can facilitate this process. My investigation reveals that there are no political conflicts evident between the Israeli and Palestinian scholars, and if there is a difference of opinion it would not have an impact on scholarship.

Historically speaking, the conflicts and wars in Europe and the problems it created have spilt over into Palestine and then into the independent State of Israel, established in 1948. The tradition of the Bible and archaeology set the tone for further interference by the West in the historical demarcation of the land as it was based on geographical lines and borders that

coincided with places of biblical heritage, and most probably also key agricultural areas and important regions of food production. The inherited Western influence does not have the same impact on the Israeli population as it has on the Arab population but is still very reliant on the flow of money to the Holy Land. It is a powerful incentive for the Israelis and the Palestinians who live within the borders of Israel and, more specifically, for tourism and holy pilgrimages emanating from the three monotheistic religions. However, the West Bank and Gaza, in my opinion, do not feature in this and they are pretty much left out of the equation. There is nothing wrong with using the Bible as a reference to excavate. It is after all an ancient textual artefact that contains information, regardless of its veracity as a historical document. The region is after all the stage on which the three monotheistic religions founded their beginnings, and the biblical text is part of these traditions. However, when the one religion seeks to dominate the archaeological discourse in terms of establishing the right of ownership of the land, based on archaeological evidence, it becomes problematic and as we see, such is the case within the political, academic and public domains. Violent ideologically driven conflict is just a step away, as we have seen over the past decades. A solution to the Israeli and Palestinian question becomes moot as any attempt at finding an amicable solution is met with suspicion. Archaeology is also met with suspicion, regardless of the research hypothesis and the integrity of the scholarship. The latter, which in my opinion, there is an abundance of in both Israel and the West Bank.

The funding of major archaeological projects will determine the impact it will have on the scholarship of archaeology as well as the public. Archaeologists, like any other scientist or researcher, are dependent on this because excavation and research are expensive ventures. We see that the funders of such projects will do this for either philanthropic reasons, the furthering of knowledge and scholarship and for reasons that are related to either religion or nationhood building. Israeli archaeology has more access to funding than their Palestinian counterparts. The lack of funding for the archaeology of the West Bank cannot be attributed to a lack of archaeological expertise. It is there. I believe that global politics and international policies are restrictive and lack the belief in its importance to the people and scholars of the West Bank. If the Palestinian authorities were in control of Jerusalem, the situation would have been different.

The role of media and the popularisation of archaeology in Israel still links itself to the biblical text, as can be seen everywhere in journalism, articles, television and social media. In the public domain history, religion and archaeology are still interlinked, and there is a

special affinity for Israel, shared by people of all countries. It may not always be a positive attitude towards Israel, but the archaeology of the country is operating in the Holy Land and this is of a singular and extraordinary nature when compared to other global archaeological sites. Any new policies, whether political or academic, will still have to deal with the issue of religion. Just as politicians cannot remove religious ideology and its textual interpretations by the people out of policymaking, neither can the archaeology of the region do so, as it is an ever-present artefact. This is the one reality that is unique to Israel and the West Bank and sets the archaeology apart from the rest of the world.

Lastly, I believe that the current archaeology practised in Israel cannot separate itself from the biblical text. It is part of the history of the land and its people and has been so for thousands of years. To surrender this source in favour of another ideology would not only be disingenuous but also rob archaeology of a reference work which deserves the same status as any other artefact. However, it is important that archaeologists remain independent in their interpretation and that they repudiate any public announcements made that do not fit the facts.

Let there be archaeologists first. There will be outside influences such as politicians, religious institutions and funders, who will want to see an interpretation that fits the prevailing status quo and that fits a specific ideology. But let the archaeologists defend their work vociferously and not allow this to dominate their interpretation. Do not let archaeology fall foul of preconceived motivations and obviously biased interpretation. Only this will afford the rich archaeological heritage and the scholarship of Israel and the West Bank the accolades that it deserves.

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## **Appendix**

**Interview between Prof. Amihai Mazar Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Mount Scopus Campus – Institute of Archaeology, Jerusalem, Israel**

18 November at 11:00

**Interview between Dr Alex Fantalkin University of Tel Aviv and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Tel Aviv Campus, Tel Aviv, Israel**

19 November 2019 at 13:30

**Amnon Ben Tor response to questions**

**Interview between Prof. Aren Maeir Bar-Ilan University and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Old Train Station, Jerusalem, Israel**

25 November 2019 at 12:00

**Interview between David Ussishkin Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Holon, Israel**

21 November 2019 at 11:00

**Interview between Dr Issa Sarie, Al-Quds University (Abu Dies campus) and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. The W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem**

22 November 2019 at 09:30

**Interview between Father Lionel Goa Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the Pontifical University ‘Antonianum’ and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Via Dolorosa, Jerusalem, Israel**

22 November 2019 at 15:00

**Interview between Gideon Solimani and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Austrian Hospice Via Dolorosa, Old City Jerusalem, Israel**

20 November 2019 at 13:00

**Interview between Dr Liora Kolska Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Old Train Station, Jerusalem, Israel**

26 November 2019 at 13:00

**Interview between Prof. Hamdan Taha, Birzeit University and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. A.M. Qattan Foundation building. Al-Tireh, Ramallah, West Bank**

23 November 2019 at 12:00

**William Dever response to questions**

**Interview between Yonathan Mizrahi and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Old Train Station, Jerusalem, Israel**

27 November 2019 at 10:00

**Interview between Prof. Ze'ev Herzog University of Tel Aviv and Dirk Conradie PhD candidate Unisa. Tel Aviv Campus, Tel Aviv, Israel**

19 November 2019 at 12:00